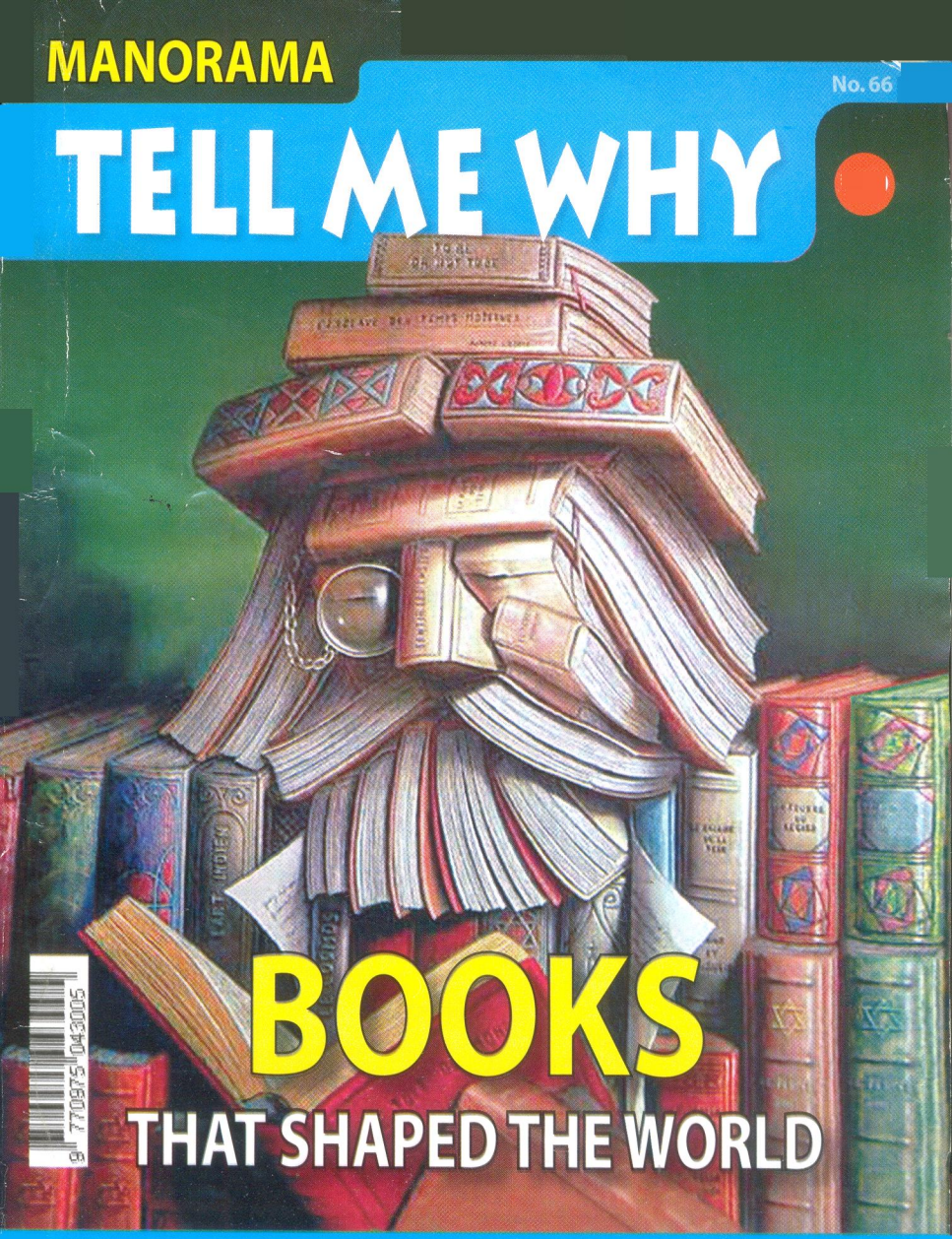
MANORAMA

No. 66

TELL ME WHY



BOOKS

THAT SHAPED THE WORLD

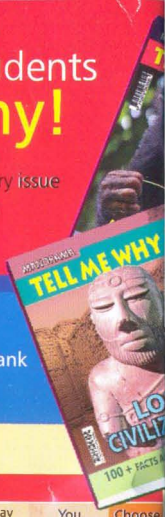
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• March 2012 • Volume : 6 • No : 6

A Book Written With An Eyelid

For Jean-Dominique Bauby, December 8th of 1995, was a black day . He had a stroke that put him into a coma. When he woke up, after twenty days, only some movement in his head and eyes remained. But, Bauby would not give up. He started writing a book. An assistant would read out letters from the alphabet and Bauby would blink his left eyelid to show his choice. Every word took about 200,000 blinks. The book, 'The Diving Bell and the Butterfly' became an instant hit.

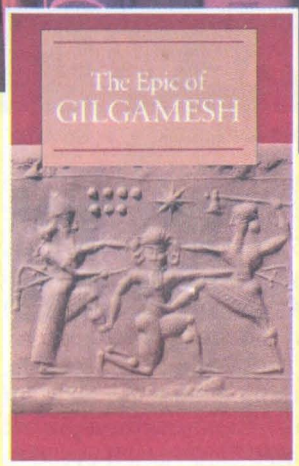
Throughout the course of history, books have been torch bearers and great motivators. Some books make such an impact that they change the way the world thinks about things. This issue of Tell Me Why showcases some among such books.

Of course, reading is subjective, and individual tastes may differ. Any such shortlists run the risk of being called subjective. Please feel free to suggest other titles you feel worthy, which can be included in a later volume.

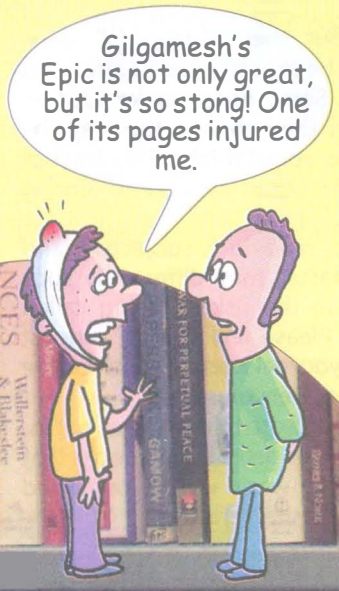
Also, please note that we have not included religious texts. Indian books that influenced the world will be published as a separate issue, in future.

FROM THE HOUSE OF MAGIC POT, MANORAMA YEAR BOOK, VANITHA, THE WEEK AND THE MALAYALA MANORAMA DAILY

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The Epic of Gilgamesh



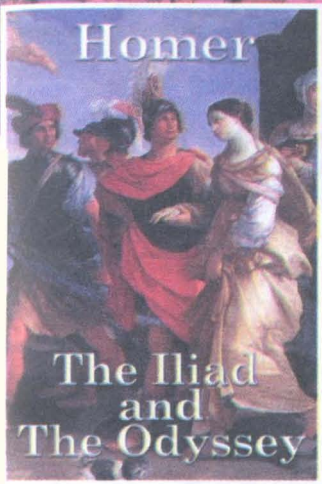
Why is 'The epic of Gilgamesh' considered one of the world's oldest books?

'The Epic of Gilgamesh' is one of the oldest recorded stories in the world. It's about an ancient king of Babylonia, Gilgamesh, who lived around 2700 BC. According to the story, Gilgamesh was part god and part human, and had many special powers. This epic is not a single story written by one author. It has many stories and myths woven together. These stories were first narrated orally by different people. Later, they were combined with tales from other languages and written down on clay tablets in what is now called the cuneiform script. The written texts were created over a thousand year period, and remained unknown to the modern world until 1872, when stone tablets written in the Babylonian language were discovered, creating a great deal of excitement.



Book of the Dead

'The Book of the Dead' is a collection of different magical spells written down in various ways by the ancient Egyptians.

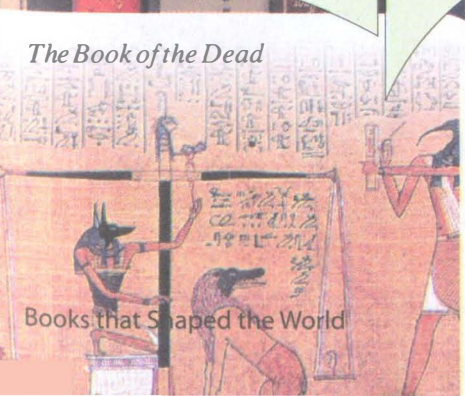


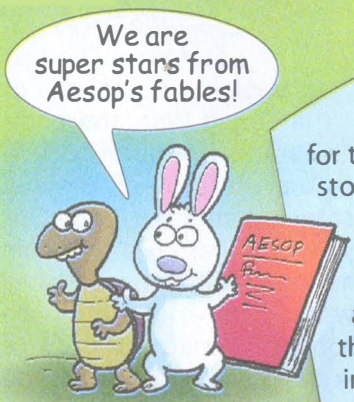
Why do 'The Iliad' and 'The Odyssey,' have a special place in world literature?

The Iliad and Odyssey are perhaps the most influential works in the history of world literature. These two epic poems were written nearly three thousand years ago by the Greek poet Homer. The Iliad begins in the middle of the Trojan War, and commemorates the heroic deeds of the brave warriors of the time. The story is continued in the Odyssey, which narrates the epic journey home of the heroes after the war is over. Together, these epic poems formed the basis of Greek classical education. For the Ancient Greeks, the Iliad and the Odyssey told them how Greece had come to be the dominant power in the western Mediterranean, and also showed them what sort of people their gods were, and how those gods behaved.

They established literary standards and conventions that writers have imitated over the centuries.

Homer

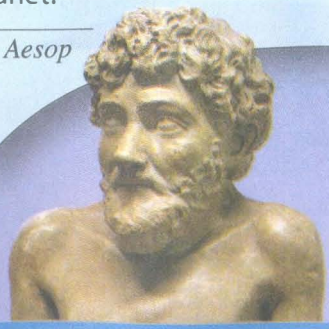




Why are Aesop's fables so popular?

Aesop's fables have been popular for thousands of years. They are simple stories, mostly about animals, that were told by a Greek slave called Aesop around 620 BC. Aesop's talent for story telling won him his freedom, and he travelled widely, narrating these tales, each of which taught an important lesson. The stories were passed down by word of mouth for centuries, and were first written down in 300 BC. They were later translated into Latin, and taught to Roman scholars. The simple storylines have a universal appeal, and the fables are important because they teach children the correct values in life, and help in developing a child's character. These stories are not only our oldest, but are still among the most widely read on our planet.

Aesop

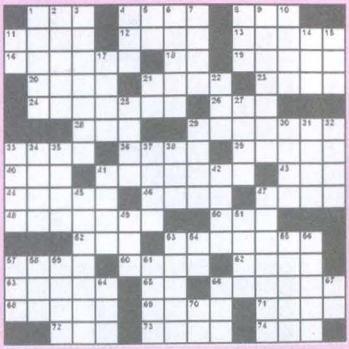




CURIOUS FACT

The First Crossword Puzzle Book

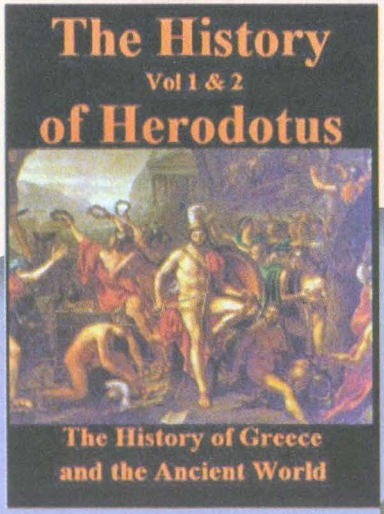
Do you enjoy doing crosswords? The first crossword puzzle book was published in 1924, in the USA. It was a compilation of crossword puzzles from the newspaper 'The New York World', and was an instant success.



Why is 'The History of Herodotus' significant?

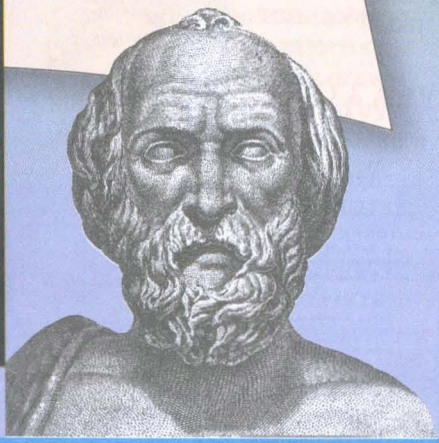
Herodotus is sometimes called 'the father of history'. He lived in Turkey during the fifth century BC, and wrote about the Greek and Persian Wars. Herodotus wanted to record what actually happened, rather than talk about gods and goddesses. His purpose was to describe the war between the Persians and the Greeks - the struggle for supremacy between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarism, between freedom and despotism.

Herodotus' work is significant because he had travelled widely, and his 'History' is one of the primary sources for information on ancient lands and peoples. There are extensive details relating to the spiritual practices and beliefs of the Greeks and other peoples. He described and analyzed warfare and politics, and his writings strongly influenced future historians.



The History of Herodotus

Herodotus



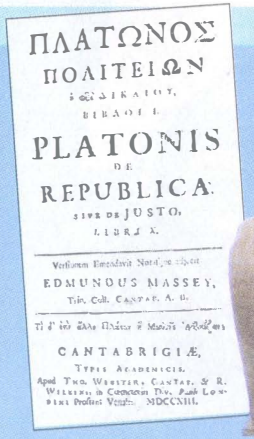
Why are 'The Analects of Confucius,' a great work?

'The Analects of Confucius', is a collection of moral and ethical principles taught by the Chinese thinker Confucius, in conversations with his disciples. There are also poems, stories, and legends in this collection. Confucius believed that Man should lead an upright life, educate himself, and contribute to the betterment of society.

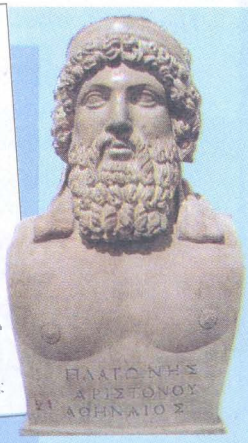
After Confucius died in 479 BC, his followers compiled his teachings in the form of dialogues between him and his students. The Analects of Confucius have highly influenced educational, social, and cultural thought in China and elsewhere.



Confucius


ΠΛΑΤΩΝΟΣ
ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ
PLATONIS
DE
REPUBLICA
SIVE DE JUSTO,
LIBRI X.
EDMUNDUS MASSEY,
CANTABRIGIÆ,

Plato's Republic



Plato

Why is Plato's 'Republic' special?

Plato was born to a wealthy family in Ancient Greece, and was a student of the great philosopher Socrates. After the death of his teacher, Plato founded the first university, called 'The Academy'. Plato wrote down his teachings in the form of conversations called dialogues. The most famous of his dialogues are 'The Republic' and 'The

Why is 'The Nicomachean Ethics,' considered the most significant work of Aristotle?

Aristotle was a brilliant philosopher of Ancient Greece, and his work 'Nicomachaen Ethics' is a collection of his thoughts and notes on ethics. These were recorded by his son Nichomachus and his students. The work is considered to be Aristotle's most significant one, since it expresses his views on a variety of subjects, from ethics, reasoning and the purpose of life, to justice and friendship. Many of Aristotle's works were lost after his death, and many were damaged by dampness and insects. The surviving books were discovered more than two centuries later, and when the Romans captured Athens, they took the books to Rome. The works were later translated from Greek to Arabic, and then to Latin, and this created worldwide interest in them.



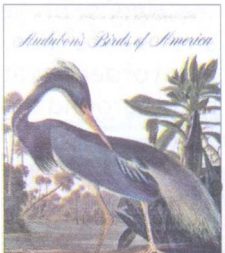
Death of Socrates'. The Republic describes what Plato thought would be a better form of government than the government of Athens. The work is also famous for its literary style.

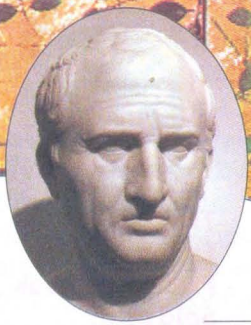


The Most Expensive Published Book Sold at an Auction

'Birds of America', by John James Audubon was sold on 7th December 1920, at Sotheby's in London for $ 11.4 million, making it the most expensive published book ever auctioned. It is a rare book containing illustrations of 435 birds drawn and printed by Audubon himself between 1827 and 1838.

Birds of America





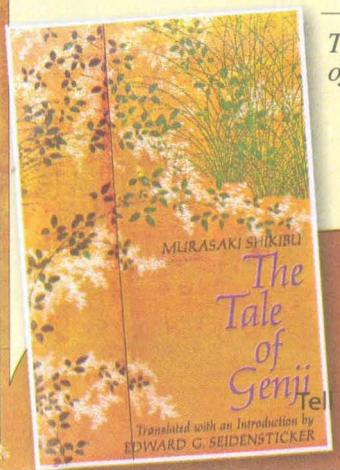
Cicero

Why did Cicero's 'On the Republic,' inspire democratic republics around the world?

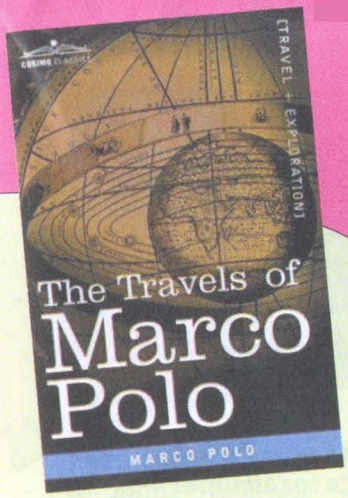
Cicero was a famous senator and orator of Ancient Rome. He lived during the last days of the Roman Republic and had studied philosophy, literature, and law. He spoke out against dishonest rulers, and his work 'On the Republic,' is an impassioned plea for responsible government. Cicero upheld the principle that all citizens should have equal rights. It was this principle that inspired the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution thousands of years later, and led to the establishment of democratic governments around the world.

Why is 'The Tale of Genji' considered the world's first novel?

The Tale of Genji was written in the 11th century by a Japanese noblewoman, Murasaki Shikibu. She was widowed at an early age, and became the empress's lady in waiting. Shikibu kept a dairy for two years, recounting her experiences at court. Later, she wrote 'The Tale of Genji', which is considered by many to be the world's first novel. It centres on the life and loves of a handsome man Hikaru Genji, born to an emperor. 'The Tale of Genji' is universally recognized as the greatest masterpiece of Japanese prose narrative. It has been translated into many languages, and is deeply appreciated for its literary excellence.



The Tale of Genji

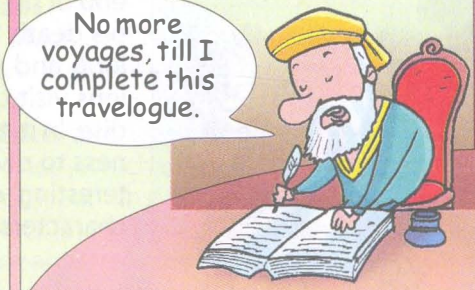


The Travels of Marco Polo

Why did 'The Travels of Marco Polo,' inspire Europeans to come to the East?

Marco Polo is probably the most famous Westerner who traveled on the Silk Road to Asia in the 14th century. His journey through Asia lasted 24 years, and he reached further than any of his predecessors, beyond Mongolia to China. He then returned to tell the tale, which became the world's greatest travelogue.

Manuscript editions of his work ran into the hundreds within a century after his death. The book was recognized as the most important account of the world outside Europe, available at the time. It paved the way for the arrivals of thousands of Westerners to the East, in the centuries to come.

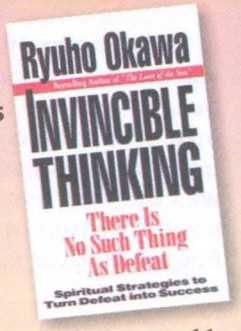




CURIOUS FACT

Happy Books

Ryuho Okawa, a Japanese writer, wrote and published 52 books between November 2009 and November 2010. This feat made him the individual with the most books written and published in a single year. He is the founder of a movement called Happy Science, and has published more than five hundred books altogether.





Canterbury Tales

The Canterbury Tales is a collection of stories written by Chaucer, a 14th century British poet. The stories are about a group of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The themes include topics such as love, treachery, and



avarice. Some of the stories are humourous, others are serious. The book is important because it was the first book of poetry written in the English language.



Why is 'The Divine Comedy,' a masterpiece for all time?

The Divine Comedy is an epic narrative poem written by Dante Alighieri. This masterpiece was written at the end of his life, and finished just before his death in 1321. The subject of this long and narrative poem is a miraculous visit to hell, purgatory, and paradise. In it, the poet journeys from darkness to divine light, meeting many interesting characters on his way. The characters whom Dante meets on his

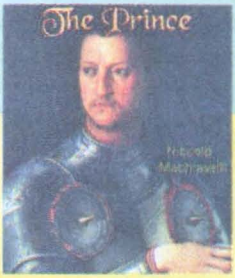




Youngest Person to Publish a Book

Little Dorothy Straight was only four years old when she wrote 'How the World Began', in 1962. It was published in 1964, making her the youngest person to have a book published. She had written the book for her grandmother, and her parents loved it so much, that they sent it to a publisher.

journey through hell and purgatory to heaven are drawn largely from ancient Roman history, and include Dante's contemporaries, personal friends, and enemies. The Divine Comedy is important for its place in the history of the development of the Italian language, and remains to this day, one of the pillars upon which the European literary tradition has been built.



The Prince

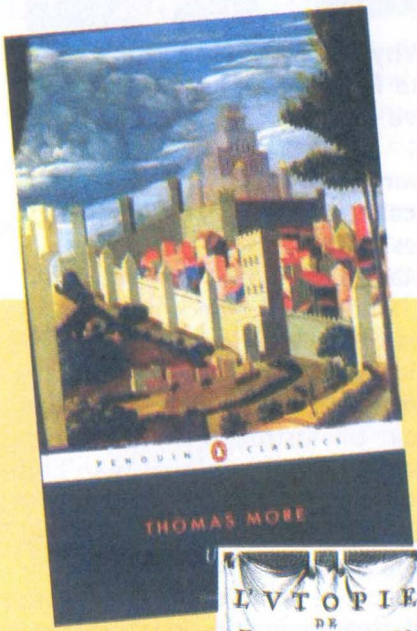
Why does 'The Prince,' have a special place among political treatises?

Machiavelli was a writer of powerful, influential, and thoughtful prose. He lived during the Renaissance, and was the author of 'The Prince', which was supposed to be a book of instructions for rulers. Machiavelli believed that man had the ability to control his own fate.

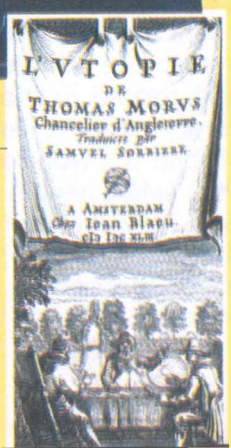
Earlier political writers had treated politics as a branch of morals. Machiavelli broke with this long tradition, and treated politics in a practical way. Machiavellian politics described the world as it was, rather than what people imagined. This was a big change in tradition, and that is why The Prince will always have a special place among political treatises.

Why did 'The Fabric of the Human Body,' bring about changes in medical training?

In 1500, the most important books used in the training of doctors were those written by Claudius Galen. Galen's ideas had been dominant for hundreds of years, but were only proved wrong for the first time by Andreas Vesalius, who wrote 'The Fabric of the Human Body' in 1543. This textbook of human anatomy presents a careful examination of the organs and the complete structure of the human body. Vesalius's work brought about an important change in medical thinking. He was able to prove that some of Galen's theories were wrong. Galen, who was only able to dis-



Utopia



Utopia- An Early Edition of the Book

Why did Sir Thomas More create 'Utopia'?

Sir Thomas More was an English lawyer, scholar, writer, Member of Parliament and chancellor in the reign of Henry VIII. He is famous for his book 'Utopia,' which was written in 1515. As Chancellor to Henry VIII, he refused to sanction Henry's divorce of Queen Catherine. He was imprisoned, tried, and executed.

More wrote a tale about an imaginary island



The Fabric of the Human Body

called Utopia, that is discovered on a voyage to the newly discovered Americas. It is a perfect state, founded entirely on reason, where the society's interests come first, and there is religious toleration and education for everyone. More wanted to point out the contrast between his ideal state and the existing English society. In time, the word Utopia came to symbolize an ideal but unattainable social system.

sect animals, assumed that humans had the same anatomy. Vesalius, on the other hand, performed dissections on humans, and revealed anatomical structures previously unknown.

Vesalius helped establish surgery as a separate medical profession, and the popularity of his book meant that greater emphasis began to be placed upon the study of anatomy in medical training.



The Largest Pop-up Book

Do you like pop-up books? Then you will love a pop-up book made for a TV commercial advertising Pearle Opticians in Belgium.

It was 4m X 3m in size, and featured pop ups that were 2.35 m tall, making it the largest pop-up book ever!



A Statue of Copernicus



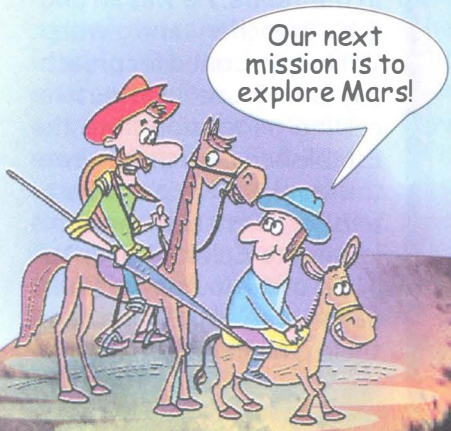
Why did Copernicus' book change perceptions about the Universe?

In 1543, Copernicus, a Polish astronomer, published a book about a new idea he had. Most people in his day thought that, the Earth was at the centre of the Universe, an idea known as a geocentric universe. However, in his book 'On the Revolutions,' Copernicus put forward a new theory. His theory was that the Earth rotates daily on its axis, and revolves yearly around the sun. He also argued that the planets circled the Sun. This challenged the long held view that the Earth was stationary at the centre of the universe, with all the planets, the Moon and the Sun rotating around it. Not many people liked Copernicus' book- in fact, they may have put him in jail for writing it, if he hadn't died shortly after writing it! Of course, we know today that Copernicus was right. The Earth really is a planet which circles the Sun.

Why is Don Quixote considered the first modern novel?

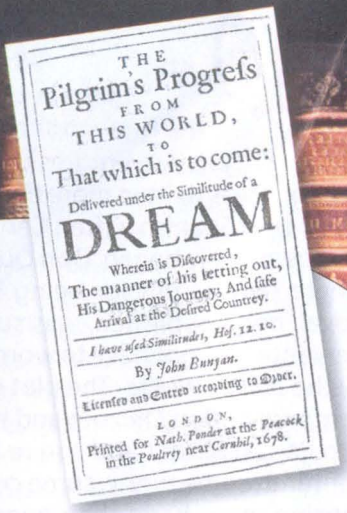
'The Adventures of Don Quixote' was written more than 400 years ago by a Spanish writer, Cervantes. Cervantes actually began 'Don Quixote' in jail, where he was put for being in debt. The novel, once published, was such a hit that Cervantes did not have to worry about money the rest of his life. The plot covers the adventures of Don Quixote and his squire, Sancho Panza. Master and squire have many adventures, some funny, some crazy, sometimes causing more harm than good! However, the characters are so lovable that the book became immensely popular, and was translated into several languages. This book is considered to be the first modern novel, because till then, popular fiction was all about chivalrous knights and dashing heroes. Cervantes changed that when he wrote in simple prose, about an ordinary man who wanted to be a knight, and who did many foolish but entertaining things in the bargain!





Why is Leonardo da Vinci's work Treatise of Painting unique?

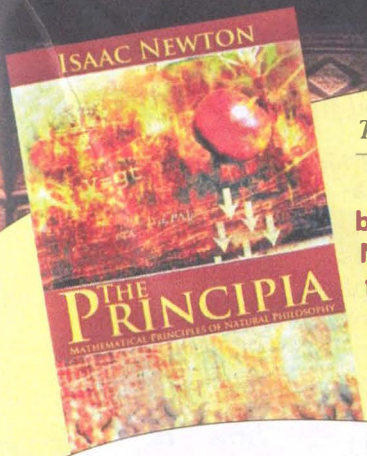
Leornardo da Vinci was not only one of the greatest painters of all times, but also perhaps the most widely talented person ever to have lived. He was a consummate painter and sculptor, a great inventor, military engineer, scientist, botanist, and mathematician! He lived during the Renaissance in Italy, and while working in Milan as an artist, he began writing texts for his students and apprentices. His notebooks covered more than 1000 pages of observations and illustrations. They remained unpublished for more than a century, and were gathered together and printed only after his death. 'Treatise of Paintings,' is unique in that it advises aspiring painters on techniques on perspective, light and shadow, colour glazing and painting mixing. It upholds da Vinci's belief that painting is not just an art, but a science as well.


THE
Pilgrim's Progress
FROM
THIS WORLD,
TO
That which is to come:
Delivered under the Similitude of a
DREAM
Wherein is Discovered,
The manner of his setting out,
His Dangerous Journey; And safe
Arrival at the Desired Countrey.
I have used Similitudes, Hos. 12. 10.
By John Bunyan.
Licensed and Entred according to Order.
LONDON,
Printed for Nath. Ponder at the Peacock
in the Poultrey near Cornhil, 1678.

The Pilgrim's Progress

Why has 'The Pilgrim's Progress' become one of the most widely read books?

'The Pilgrim's Progress', was written by John Bunyan in the 1600's. He was an English preacher and writer. While imprisoned for preaching the Gospel without receiving permission from the Established Church, he wrote this book in two parts. Part I tells of 'Christian' and his journey to 'Celestial City'; Part II tells of the journey of Christian's wife Christiana and their children to Celestial City. The two



parts work together as a unified whole, which describes and depicts the believer's life and struggles. Translated into over 100 languages, 'The Pilgrim's Progress' is one of the most famous classics of literature.

On one level, its simple style provides entertaining reading. On the other, it offers a religious message to readers to help them save their souls. Is it any wonder then that it was read widely throughout Europe and the American colonies when it was published, and that it remains popular to this day?

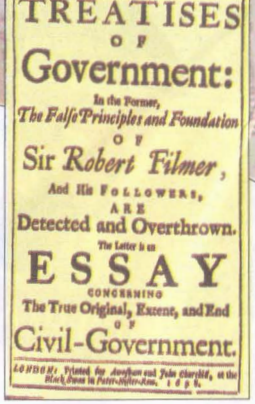
The Principia

Why is it said that Newton's book 'Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy' laid the foundation of modern physics?

Isaac Newton was an English physicist and mathematician, and the greatest scientist of his era. Before Newton's time, no one could satisfactorily explain why objects always fell downwards, what caused the tides, or how planets remained in their orbits. Newton came up with numerous theories and contributed ideas to many different fields including physics, mathematics and philosophy. In 1687, with the support of his friend the astronomer Edmond Halley, Newton published his single greatest work, 'Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy'. This showed how a universal force, gravity, applied to all objects in all parts of the universe. He also described the three laws of motion. These concepts laid the foundation for modern physics, and remained at the forefront of science for centuries after.

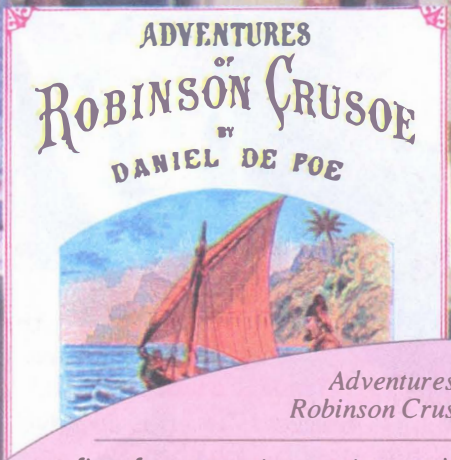
Why is 'Two Treatises of Government' the book that laid the foundation for democracy?

John Locke was an English philosopher who was one of the pioneers of modern thinking. He made great contributions in studies of politics, government, and psychology, and is famous for his book 'Two Treatises of Government,' that was published in 1689. Locke hoped to point out the defects in the existing form of government, and lay the groundwork for a better option. Locke argued that sovereignty lies not in the king or with the state, but with the people, and insisted that people had the right to overthrow a tyrannical government. Locke believed in the middle class, and its right to freedom of conscience and right to property. He had faith in science, and confidence in the goodness of humanity. Locke's work was very important to the writers of the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution. They borrowed some of his ideas, and expanded on them. His work also inspired the French Revolution, and can be said to have laid the foundations for modern democracies.


TREATISES
OF
Government:
In the Former,
The False Principles and Foundation
OF
Sir Robert Filmer,
And His FOLLOWERS,
ARE
Detected and Overthrown.
The Latter is an
ESSAY
CONCERNING
The True Original, Extent, and End
OF
Civil-Government.
LONDON: Printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, at the Black Swan in Pater-noster-Row. 1690.

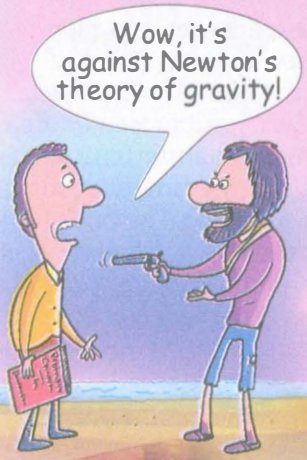
Why has Daniel Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe' fascinated readers around the world?

Daniel Defoe was an English writer, most famous for his novel 'Robinson Crusoe' that was published in 1719. The story is about a shipwrecked man called Robinson Crusoe, and his adventures on a deserted island where he was washed ashore. The book captured the imagination of its early 18th century readers, and went through six editions in just its



Adventures of Robinson Crusoe

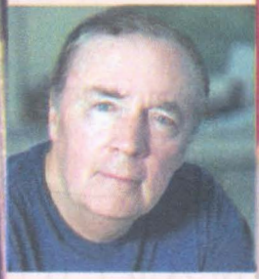
first four months on the market. One reason for its popularity is that it is packed with excitement and adventure, with sailing ships, stormy seas, guns, and cannibals. It is also a vivid commentary on the human need for both society and solitude, on Man's ingenuity and spiritual struggles, and on the solid strength of middle class values. Without doubt, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe established a realistic style of fiction, and set the tone for modern novels.

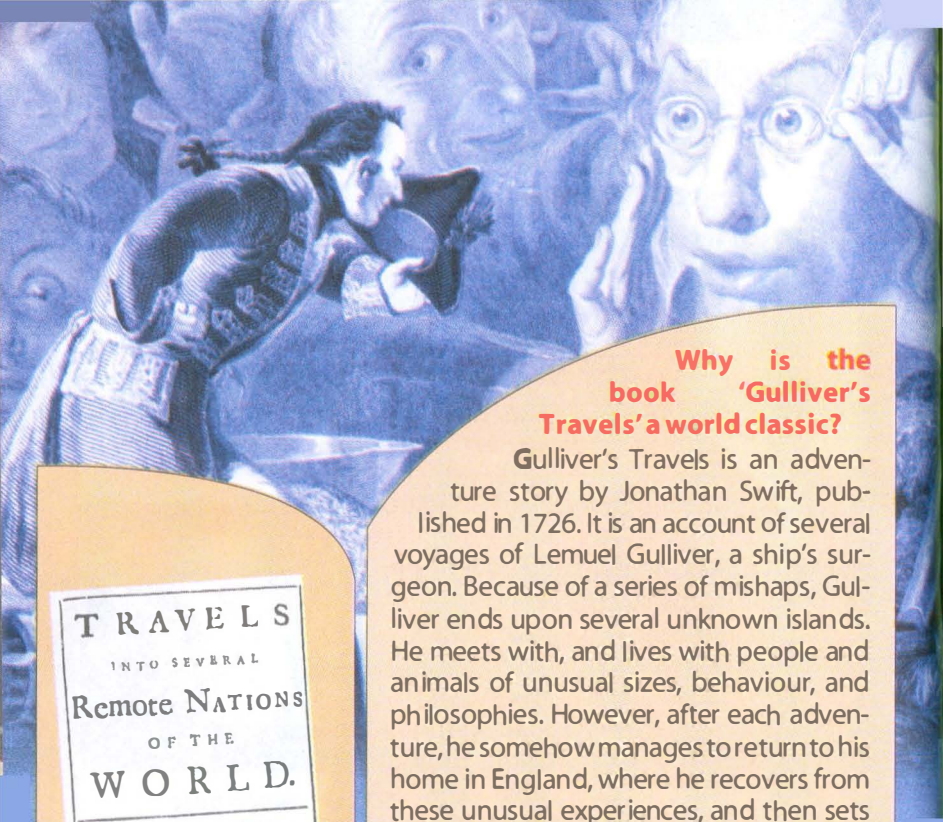


CURIOUS FACT

A Million e-books

James Patterson, an American writer, became the first author to cross more than a million sales in electronic books. 1.14 million units of his books were sold for electronic devices such as the Kindle and iPad. His novels featuring Alex Cross and the Women's Murder Club are immensely popular.

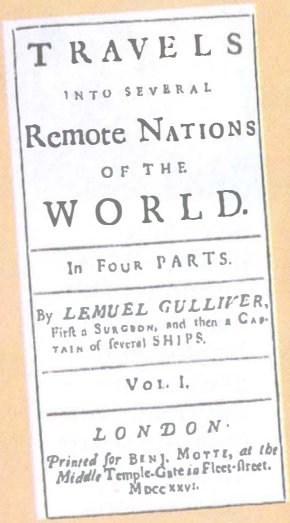




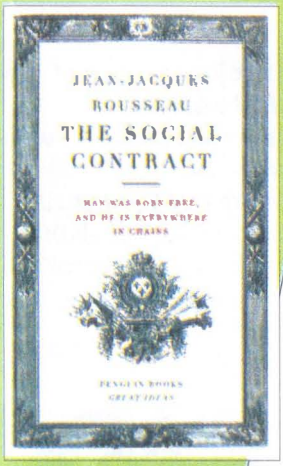
Why is the book 'Gulliver's Travels' a world classic?

Gulliver's Travels is an adventure story by Jonathan Swift, published in 1726. It is an account of several voyages of Lemuel Gulliver, a ship's surgeon. Because of a series of mishaps, Gulliver ends upon several unknown islands. He meets with, and lives with people and animals of unusual sizes, behaviour, and philosophies. However, after each adventure, he somehow manages to return to his home in England, where he recovers from these unusual experiences, and then sets out again on a new voyage.

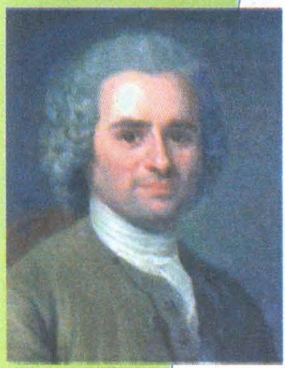
What makes the book a world classic is the treatment. Swift has represented ideas as grotesque creatures, absurd customs as absurd objects, and the familiar as something new and surprising. The book is divided into four sections, and is part novel, part adventure, and part satire. It did not stick to any rules, and is widely considered to be Swift's greatest work, as well as one of the indisputable classics of English literature.


TRAVELS
INTO SEVERAL
Remote NATIONS
OF THE
WORLD.
In FOUR PARTS.
By LEMUEL GULLIVER,
First a SURGEON, and then a CAPTAIN of several SHIPS.
VOL. I.
LONDON:
Printed for BEN. MOTTE, at the Middle Temple-Gate in Fleet-street.
MDCCXXVI.

Gulliver's Travels



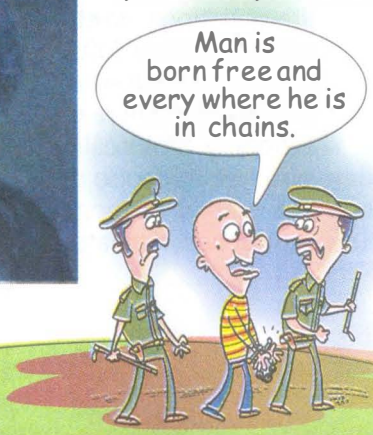
The Social Contract



Rousseau

Why is 'The Social Contract' considered to be the Bible of the French Revolutionaries?

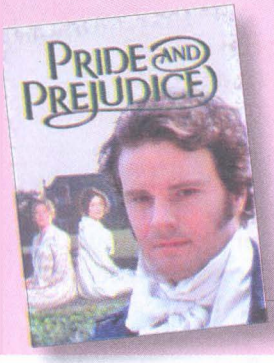
'The Social Contract' was written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an important figure in the history of philosophy. The Social Contract was a masterpiece written by him in 1762. In this book, Rousseau explained his political theories, which would later influence the writers of the United States Constitution as well as the leaders of the French Revolution. The book opens with the famous words 'Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains'. With its slogan, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity', it became the bible of the French revolutionaries. Today, 'The Social Contract,' is accepted as one of the single most important declarations of the natural rights of man in the history of political philosophy.





Highest Earner

James Patterson has the distinction of being the highest earner among authors of adult fiction. More than 200 million of his books have been sold since 1992, and last year, he earned $70 million from his writings.



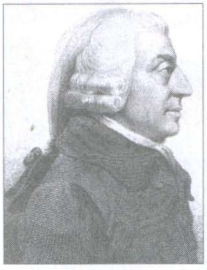
Pride and Prejudice

Why is 'Pride and Prejudice' one of the best loved novels of all time?

Jane Austen was an English novelist who lived in the 19th century. Her books are set among the English middle and upper classes, and are notable for their wit, social observation, and insights into the lives of women of that era. Her novel 'Pride and Prejudice,' was

Why did 'Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,' lay the foundation for modern economics?

Adam Smith was a Scottish economist and philosopher who became famous because of his influential book 'Inquiry into the Nature And Causes Of The Wealth of Nations', written in 1776. Smith lived in an era when the British public and Parliament clung to a feudal economic system in which the government maintained control over the economy. Smith called for economic freedom and free trade. He described the workings of a market economy, the division of labour in production, the nature of wealth in relation to money, and many other economic concepts, including self interest and the international aspects of free trade. Is it any wonder then that Adam Smith is considered the father of modern economics, and that his ideas became the basis for free enterprise?



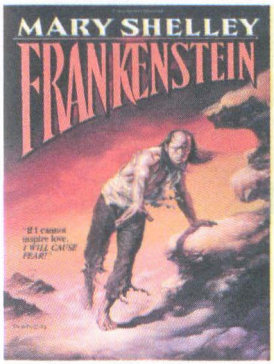
Adam Smith



Most Expensive Book

The original copies of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales were printed in 1477. Only one of these copies is still owned privately. It was sold in 1998 for 4,621,500 pounds-and gained entry into the Guinness Book of Records as the most expensive book ever sold.

first published in 1813. It is the story of Mrs. Bennet's attempts to marry off her five daughters. Excitement fizzes through the Bennet household when young, eligible Mr. Charles Bingley rents the fine house nearby. One of his friends, the wealthy Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, annoys the vivacious Elizabeth Bennet, the second of the Bennet girls, and she annoys him. The romantic clash between the opinionated Elizabeth and Darcy forms the heart of the story, which is told with a wit and sparkle that has made it one of the best loved novels of all time.



Frankenstein

the novel was published when she was twenty-one. When the 'Frankenstein monster' realizes how he came to be created and is rejected by mankind, he seeks revenge on his creator's family to avenge his own sorrow. Mary Shelley first wrote Frankenstein as a short story after the poet Lord Byron suggested to his friends that each of them should write a ghost story. Published almost 200 years ago, Mary Shelley's Gothic classic still brings goose bumps to modern-day readers.

Why is 'Frankenstein', an unforgettable book?

Frankenstein is a novel written by Mary Shelley about a horrible monster created by mad scientist Victor Frankenstein. Shelley started writing the story when she was eighteen, and

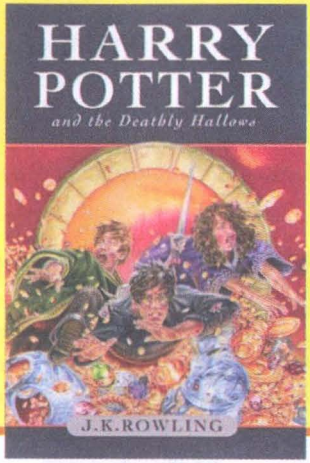




CURIOUS FACT

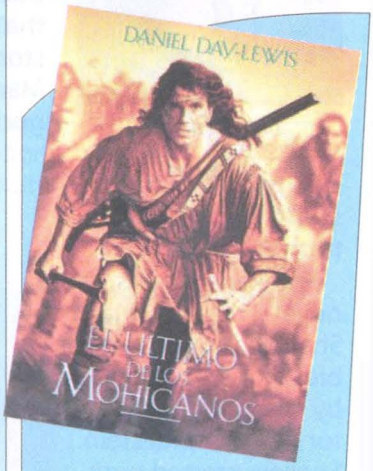
Fastest Selling

'Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows' by J.K. Rowling sold more than 8.3 million copies in the 24 hours following its release in the USA, creating a record. It also had the biggest initial print run of 15 million copies – another record!



Why does 'The Last of the Mohicans' have a unique place in American Literature?

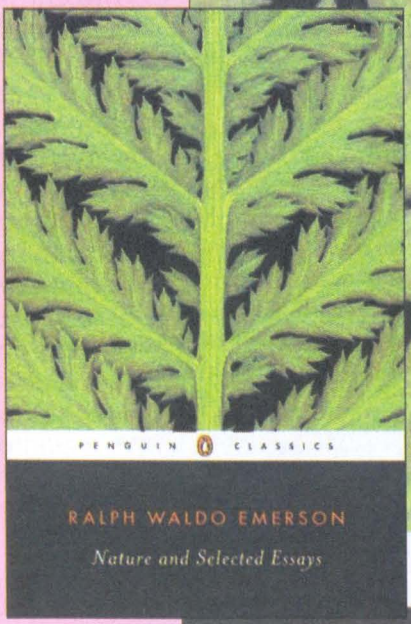
James Fenimore Cooper is considered to be the first true American novelist. His most popular work, 'The Last of the Mohicans', published in 1826, has remained one of the most widely read novels throughout the world. Along with his other four novels, this book has had a tremendous impact on the way many view both the American Indians and the frontier period of American history. This historical novel has distinctly American characters and settings, and starkly portrays the destruction of the American wilderness by the colonists from Europe. While other writers had often depicted American Indians as savages, James Cooper highlighted their dignified and noble side. The novel became an instant best seller, and James Cooper was established as an important literary figure.



The Last of the Mohicans

Why is Ralph Waldo Emerson's book 'Nature' linked with the Transcendentalism?

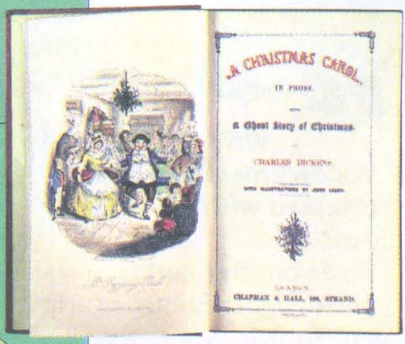
Ralph Waldo Emerson, the author of 'Nature', founded the American Branch of a European movement known as Transcendentalism. The followers of this movement stressed the spiritual potential of every individual. Emerson believed that God could be found by looking into one's own soul. In his book Nature, he advised the reader to seek a new world by rejecting organized religion and materialism, and to seek the Divine through Nature. Before long, Nature became the guide for many readers who shared Emerson's beliefs, and the Transcendentalist Movement gained strength during the 1840s and 1850s.



Nature and Selected Essays

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

A Christmas Carol



Why is Charles Dickens 'A Christmas Carol' one of the best loved stories?

Charles Dickens was a famous writer who lived in England in the 19th Century. 'The Christmas Carol', is the first of five books on Christmas that were published in 1843. The book is a classic about a mean spirited miser Ebenezer Scrooge who hates Christmas. The point of the story is to show how and why he changes. Scrooge has become one of Dickens' best-known creations. His name has become a byword for meanness and his phrase 'Bah, humbug', has also taken on a life of its own. The Christmas Carol has become one of the most loved stories for the way it captures the spirit of Christmas so beautifully.



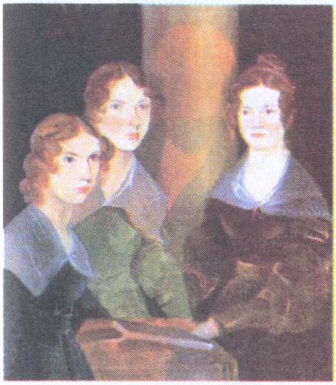
First Dollar Billionaire Author

J.K. Rowling, the creator of Harry Potter, was the first author to earn a billion dollars. 400 million Harry Potter books have been sold worldwide, making her one of the five self made female billionaires in the world.

J.K. Rowling







Bronte Sisters

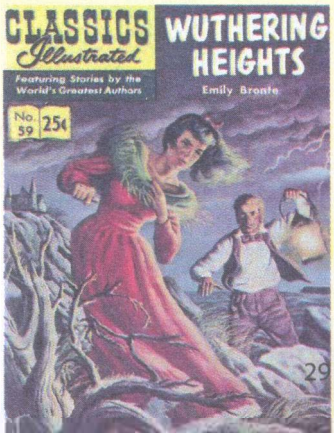
CURIOUS FACT **The Bronte Sisters**

Emily Bronte had two sisters, Charlotte and Anne. Together, they are known as the Bronte sisters and they have charmed, inspired, and even shocked readers from the Victorian Age to today. Raised in Yorkshire, the three sisters produced classics like 'Jane Eyre', 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.'

Why is Emily Bronte's 'Wuthering Heights' considered different from the novels of that time?

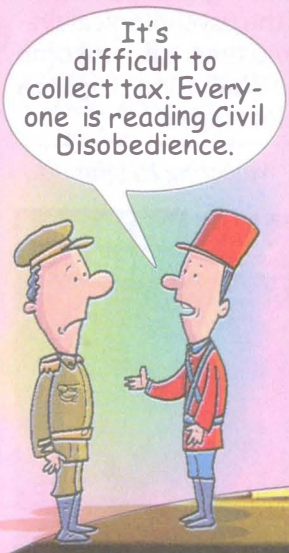
Emily Bronte was a nineteenth century English author who wrote just one novel- Wuthering Heights. The book reflects her passionate love of the moors, where she spent nearly all her life. It is a sombre, and sometimes depressing tale of love, hate and revenge, told through the viewpoint of two narrators, and spanning two generations. The novel is quite different from others of that time for many reasons. Instead of being compassionate and heroic, the hero and heroine, Heathcliff and Catherine are selfish and petty. Instead of being blissfully in love, Catherine marries someone else and breaks Heathcliff's heart. Too proud to tell each other their true feelings, they fight, storm, and rage against each other, destroying themselves in the process. There is no doubt however, that the emotional intensity of the novel, the gloomy perspective, the psychological drama and the tragic outcome make Wuthering Heights a timeless classic.

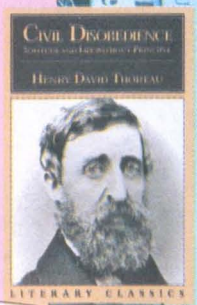
Wuthering Heights



How did the book 'Civil Disobedience' influence future leaders?

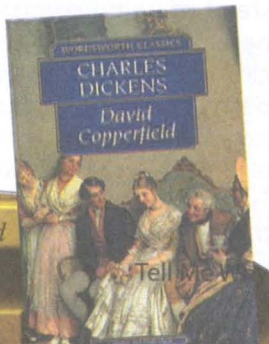
The book 'Civil Disobedience,' was written by Henry Thoreau, an American author who lived in the 19th century. The book was written after he spent a night in jail for refusing to pay a poll tax. 'Civil Disobedience,' is an analysis of the individual's relationship with the state. It focuses on why men obey governmental law even when they believe it to be unjust. According to Thoreau, if a law requires a person to commit an injustice to another, then the law should be broken. The book profoundly influenced a young lawyer in South Africa who was protesting that government's treatment of immigrant workers from India. The lawyer was Mohandas K. Gandhi. Gandhi found in Thoreau the techniques he would use in thesubsequent struggle for Indian independence, and civil disobedience became a powerful tool for future leaders.





Why was 'David Copperfield' considered a reflection of social conditions in 19th century England?

Charles Dickens, the great 19th century English author, is the author of the famous book 'David Copperfield'. The book is about David Copperfield, an orphan, and through his hero, Dickens draws openly on his own life. It is a story of the develop-





No Verbs

Can you imagine a novel that does not contain any verbs? It may seem impossible, but believe it or not, French author Michel Thaler published a 233 page novel 'Le Train de Nulle Part' or 'The Nowhere Train,' which has no verbs. A sample sentence goes like this 'Fool's luck! A vacant seat, almost, in that train. A provisional stop, why not? So, my new address in this nowhere train: car 12, 3rd compartment, forward. Once again, why not?' Astounding, isn't it?



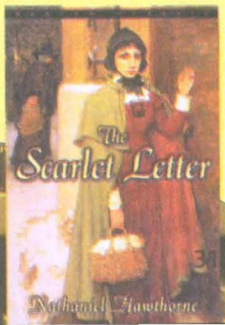
ment of a writer, but it is also a portrait of Victorian England at mid-century with a host of characters designed to show various social features like class structure, the penal system, the education available for poorer children, and different forms of child labour and abuse.

David Copperfield is a story of social protest, but it is also about a young man who must learn to overcome tragedy, and trust that real love and happiness may yet be his.

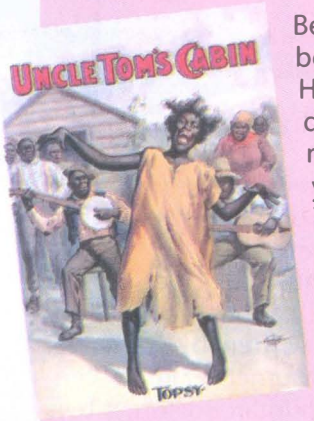
Why is The Scarlet Letter considered a masterpiece of American literature?

'The Scarlet Letter' is a novel published in 1850 and written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Set in 17th century puritan Boston, it tells the story of Hester Prynne, who gives birth after committing adultery and struggles to create a new life of repentance and dignity. The novel shows the terrible impact a single, passionate act has on the lives of three members of a community. It is a masterful exploration of humanity's unending struggle with sin, guilt, and pride.

The Scarlet Letter



Why is 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' considered the spark that lit the American Civil War?

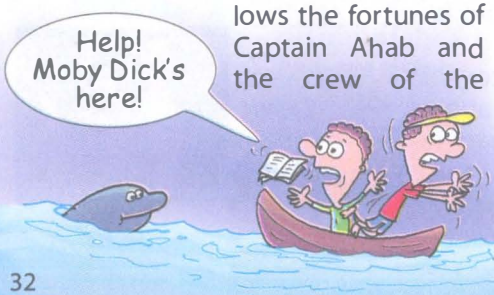


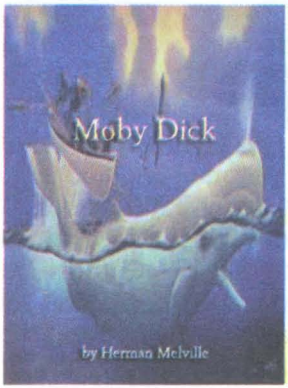
'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' is a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, published in 1852. The story begins as two slaves, Tom and four year old Harry, are sold to pay their owner's family debts. The story focuses on Tom, a strong, religious man living with his wife and three young children, and Eliza, Harry's mother. The novel ends when both Tom and Eliza escape slavery. Eliza and her family reach Canada, but Tom's freedom comes with death.

Uncle Tom's Cabin changed forever how Americans viewed slavery. It was a

Why is 'Moby Dick' considered Herman Melville's greatest work?

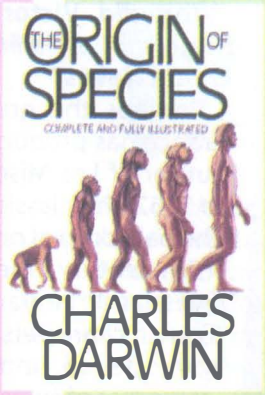
'Moby Dick,' is considered to be the greatest work of the American author Herman Melville, whose sea going experiences became the subject of this novel. Hailed as a classic literary masterpiece, 'Moby Dick,' tells the tale of one man's fatal obsession, and his willingness to sacrifice his life and that of his crew to achieve his goal. The story follows the fortunes of Captain Ahab and the crew of the Pequod, a 19th century whaling ship. The Pequod is on its last voyage in pursuit of Moby Dick, the great





Moby Dick

runaway best-seller, and contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War by opening people's eyes to the harsh realities of about slavery, and presenting things in a personalized way from the slave's point of view.

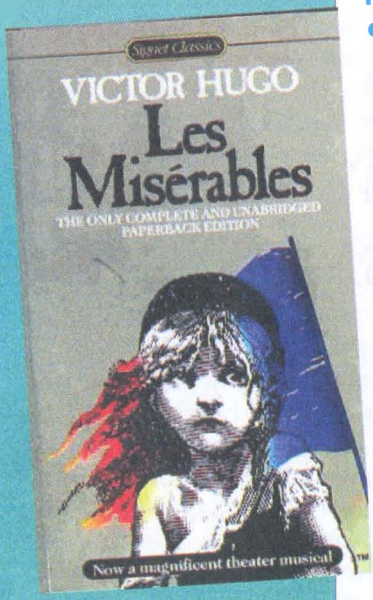


white whale which has been Ahab's bitter adversary for many years. Narrated by the sole survivor Ishmael, the tale combines a wealth of literary symbolism, hidden meaning, and philosophical debate with adventure and gives a detailed historical account of the 19th century whaling. Without doubt, this timeless epic is one of the greatest sea stories ever told.

Why is 'On the Origin of Species' called the book that shook the world?

Charles Darwin's book 'On the Origin of Species,' introduced the concept that populations evolve over the course of generations, through a process of natural selection. He wrote the book based on the evidence that he had collected during the course of his voyage on the ship HMS Beagle in the 1831. Darwin had encountered the extraordinary animal life of the Galapagos Islands. On his return, he put forth his theory in his book. When first published in 1859, its central theory - that the natural order was not permanent and unchanging, but a gradual process of evolution - shook the world. It infuriated many people because it challenged the existing religious belief that God created man in his own image.





Les Miserables

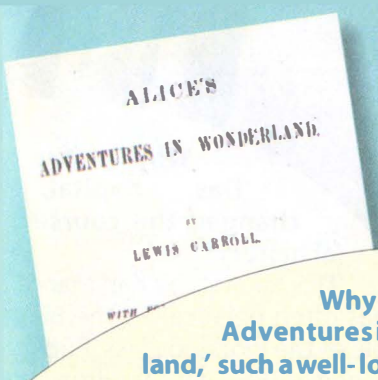
Why did Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables' create waves?

Perhaps the greatest writer that France has produced is Victor Hugo, author of Les Miserables. Published in 1862, this classic tale is set against the backdrop of political upheaval in 19th-century France. It follows the lives and interactions of several French characters over a seventeen-year period and focuses on the struggles of ex-convict Jean Valjean and his experience of redemption. This historical fiction also examines the nature of law and grace, the history of France, architecture of Paris, politics, moral philosophy, justice, religion, and different types of love. It spoke for those members of society forced by unemployment and starvation to commit crimes. The poor understood Hugo's message, and worshipped him as their spokesman. Les Miserables created waves because Hugo had written a book about the poor and suffering people, a book that demanded a change in society's judgment of its citizens.



Longest Novel

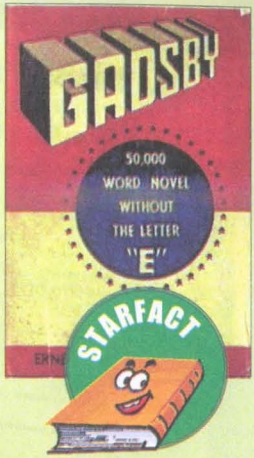
The longest novel in the English language is 'Clarissa'. It runs to about one million words, and was written by Samuel Richardson. It was published in 1748, and composed entirely of letters written by the characters, and some of the letters appear endless to the reader!



Why is 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,' such a well-loved book?

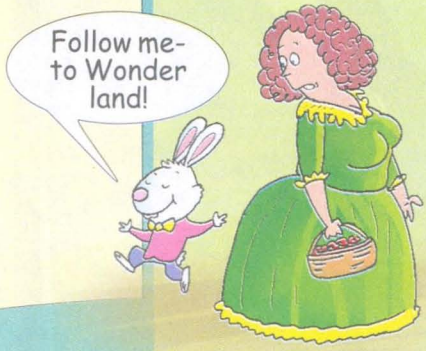
For more than 130 years, children have revelled in the the delightful fantasy called 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' written by Lewis Carroll. This remarkable story of a little girl called Alice, who embarks on possibly one of the most amazing, fantastical adventures in literary history, has more than stood the test of time. In it, the reader meets not only Alice, but also the White Rabbit, the Queen of Hearts, the Mock Turtle, and the Mad Hatter, among a multitude of other characters - extinct, fantastical, and commonplace creatures.

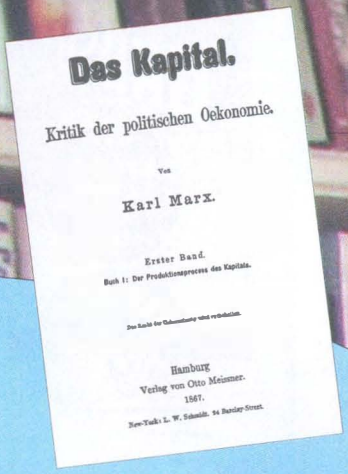
Alice journeys through this wonderland, trying to fathom the meaning of her strange experiences... but they turn out to be 'curiouser and curiouser'! 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,' is full of parody and satire. Adults enjoy Carroll's comments on history, politics, and society, while children simply love it for its absurdity and magical quality.



No 'E'

Another amazing novel is one that is written without the letter 'e' appearing anywhere in it. The novel 'Gadsby,' by Ernest Vincent has 50,000 words, but not a single word has the letter 'e' in it!




Das Kapital.

Kritik der politischen Oekonomie.

Von

Karl Marx.

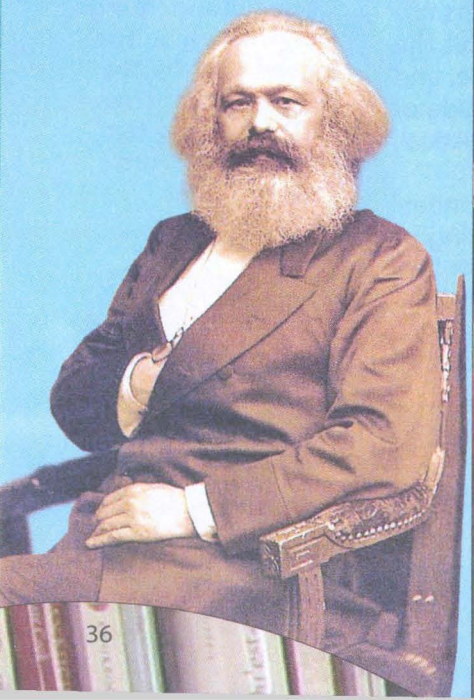
Erster Band.

Buch 1: Der Produktionsprocess des Kapitals.

Hamburg
Verlag von Otto Meissner.
1867.

Das Kapital

Karl Marx



Why has 'Das Kapital,' changed the course of history?

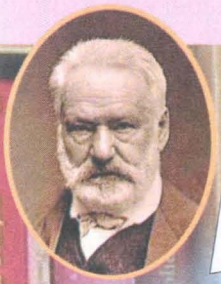
'Das Kapital,' by Karl Marx has often been called the Bible of the working class. Published in 1867, it is a landmark work that condemns capitalism. Karl Marx was a hugely influential revolutionary thinker and philosopher. His writings formed the theoretical base for modern international communism.

Marx believed that that all human history had been based on class struggles, but that these would ultimately disappear with the victory of the masses. His work is now considered by communists all over the world to be the source of absolute truth on matters of economics, philosophy, and politics. 'Das Kapital,' Karl Marx's masterpiece, is the book that above all others formed the twentieth century. From it sprung the economic and political systems that in our time, dominated half the Earth for half a century.

CURIOUS FACT

Too Long

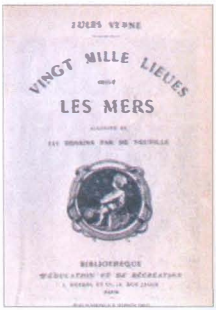
Many people attribute the longest sentence in literature to Victor Hugo. The claim is that, a sentence in 'Les Miserables,' has 823 words earning it that title. However, that applies to French literature. Traditionally, the longest sentence in English literature has been said to be a sentence in 'Ulysses' by James Joyce, which has 4,391 words!



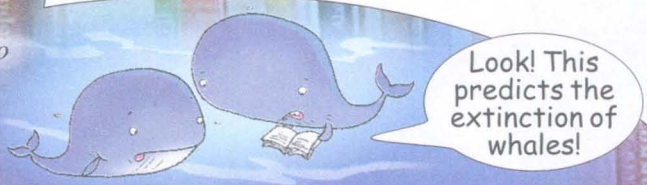
Victor Hugo

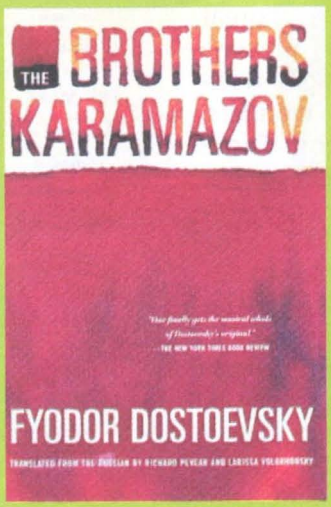
Why is it said that Jules Verne predicted many scientific advances in 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea'?

Jules Verne, a 19th century French author, wrote many great books portraying imagined scientific wonders. In 'Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea', he wrote about the adventures of Captain Nemo and the crew of an atomic submarine called the Nautilus - long before submarines or atomic energy were even thought of! In many ways, the Nautilus isn't all that different from some modern subs. The novel also describes in realistic detail, not just the submarine, but its undersea explorations and the places it visits, including the South Pole, and the lost city of Atlantis. Amazingly, in the book, Jules Verne even predicts environmental problems like the extinction of whales!



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea

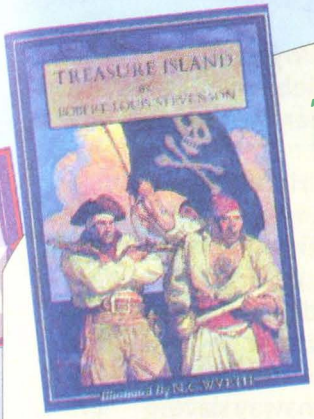




Brothers Karamazov

Why is 'The Brothers Karamazov,' considered one of the greatest novels of all time?

'The Brothers Karamazov,' was written by Fyodor Dostoevsky, a great Russian author who lived in the 19th century. It is a compelling, profound, and complex story of a murder- and of the four sons of the murdered man who each had a motive to kill him. They were Dmitry, the sensualist, Ivan, the intellectual, Alyosha, the mystic and the twisted, and cunning Smerdyakov, the illegitimate child. The novel is lurid, nightmarish, and brilliant. It grips the reader with a sordid love triangle, obsession, and a breathtaking courtroom drama. It is also a search for the truth by the author- about Man, about life, about the existence of God. It was Dostoevsky's final work, his crowning achievement- and perhaps, the finest novel of all time.



Treasure Island

Why is 'Treasure Island,' a classic of children's literature?

'Treasure Island,' written by Robert Louis Stevenson, is one of the most exciting adventure stories for children. Published in 1883, it has captured the imagination of children of all ages across the world with its tale of a search for buried treasure. The author has created a thrilling story of adventure and treachery on the high seas, all seen through the eyes of a boy named Jim Hawkins. Jim is the hero of the story, and he's a good lad with a stout heart.

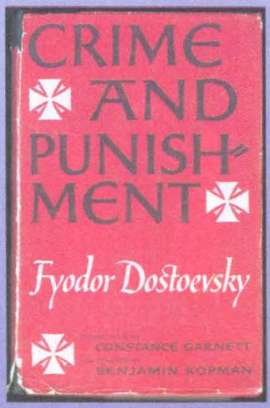
The story has many colourful characters, and the most fascinating among them is Long John Silver, the pirate captain. The plot moves along very briskly, with no wasted scenes, and the suspense is so gripping, that it can be enjoyed not just by children, but by adults too.

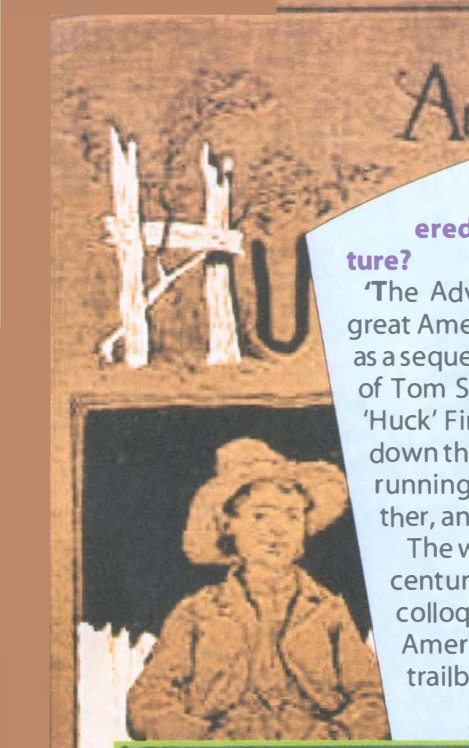


Crime and Punishment

'Crime and Punishment' is another masterpiece by Dostoevsky. It is the disturbing story of a young man's descent into crime. It is a tale of horror, guilt, and punishment, a crime novel without a mystery which still manages to create almost unbearable tension in the reader's mind.

Crime and Punishment

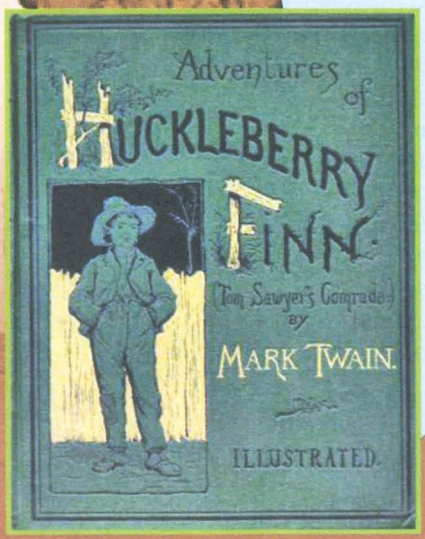




Why is 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn' considered a trailblazer in American literature?

'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,' is a great American novel, written by Mark Twain, as a sequel to his earlier book 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer'. The book tells the story of 'Huck' Finn, his friend Jim, and their journey down the Mississippi River on a raft. Both are running away- Huck from his drunken father, and Jim as a runaway slave.

The wit and wisdom of Mark Twain, a 19th century American author, and his use of colloquial language and portrayal of American themes has made this book a trailblazer in American literature. The story of Huckleberry Finn abounds with enduring lessons and images that shine through in every page. Is it any wonder then, that throughout the 20th century, the book has become famous as one of Twain's greatest achievements?



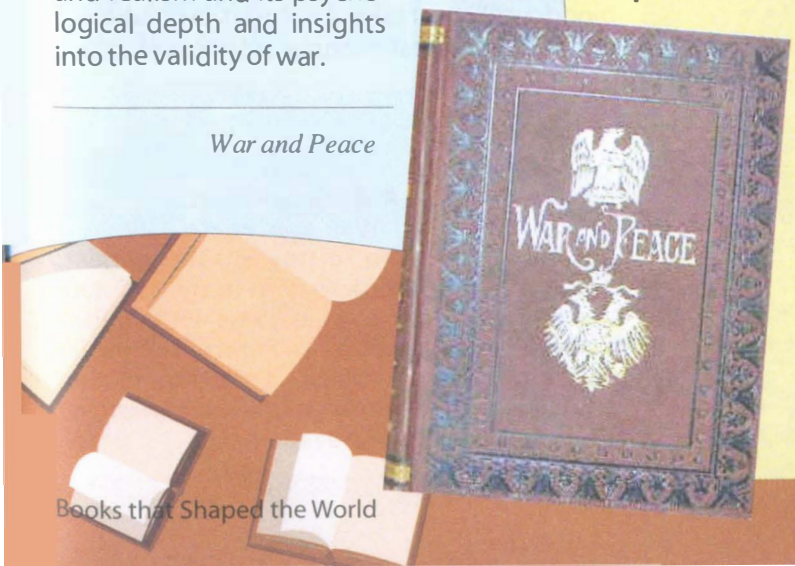
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Why is Tolstoy's 'War and Peace,' considered a monumental achievement?

'War and Peace' by Leo Tolstoy is a novel that took seven years to write, and spans a period of fifteen years, Published in 1886, the story is about Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812.

As the invasion progresses, Tolstoy vividly follows characters from diverse backgrounds–peasants and nobility, civilians and soldiers–as they struggle with the problems unique to their era, their history, and their culture. Gradually, these characters take on a life of their own to become some of the most moving– and human– figures in world literature. 'War and Peace' is a truly monumental achievement for its scope and literary style, its historical content and realism and its psychological depth and insights into the validity of war.

War and Peace

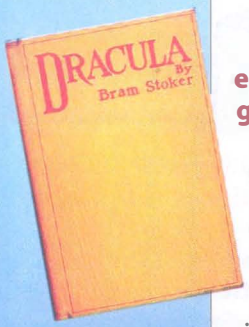




CURIOUS FACT

Challenges Patience

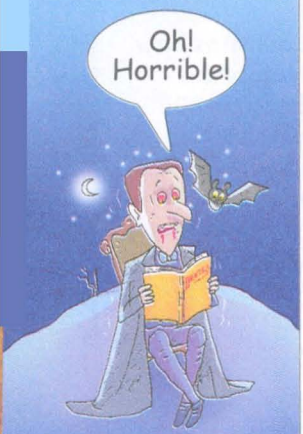
The book that challenges the patience of a reader the most is one that demonstrates how to calculate the number pi in 800 pages. It is titled 'Pi: A Source Book,' and documents the history of pi from the dawn of mathematical time to the present.

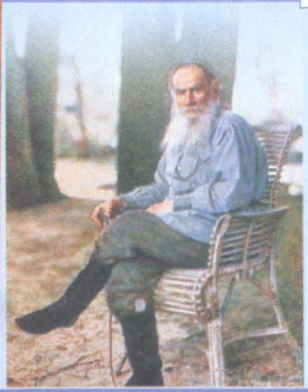


Why is Bram Stoker's 'Dracula,' one of the greatest of horror stories?

Bram Stoker's 'Dracula,' is one of the most magnificent novels of the 19th century. It portrays the struggle between good and evil, tradition and modernity. The author didn't invent vampires, but his novel captured the public's imagination and made vampire stories the rage.

Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' is the story of the notorious vampire Count Dracula, lord of the undead, who rises from his coffin at night to suck the blood of the living. The book succeeds in creating an aura of the culture of the Victorian era. The characters - men and women - their behaviour, lifestyle, ethics and aesthetics - all are deeply and truly Victorian. A lunatic asylum, a bleak Transylvanian castle, an ancient cemetery... these are the dark backgrounds to the even darker deeds portrayed in this most bloodcurdling of tales. Dracula is undoubtedly one of the greatest of horror stories ever told.







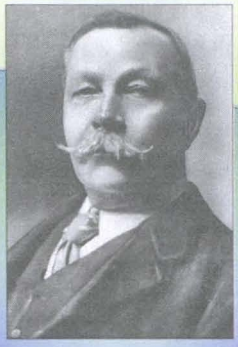
A Writer's Writer

'War and Peace,' by Leo Tolstoy was the longest book written in the 19th century. The original text has some 460000 Russian and French words, and since there were no computers or copying machines at that time, it was Tolstoy's wife who copied the manuscript by hand, seven times!

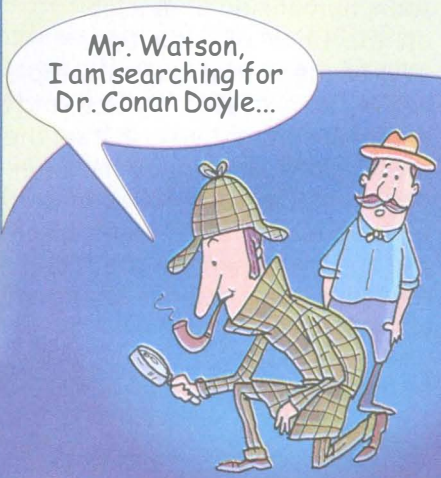
Why is Sherlock Holmes one of the most enduring characters in literature?

'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes,' was written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who practiced medicine until 1891, when he became a full time writer. Doyle based the character of Sherlock Holmes on Doctor Joseph Bell, a surgeon and teacher he had studied with while attending Edinburgh University. Dr. Bell had the uncanny ability to reveal a patient's symptoms, diagnose patients, and report on their origins before they would speak a word to him about their afflictions! This gift was a characteristic of Sherlock Holmes too.

The first Sherlock Holmes story, 'A Study in Scarlet,' was written in three weeks in 1886, and published in 1887. The second Sherlock Holmes story, 'The Sign of the Four,' was written for the Lippincott's Magazine and the later stories appeared in the Strand Magazine. Sherlock Holmes remains one of the most loved, and most famous of fictional detectives to this day, because of his integrity, trustworthiness, sensibility, rational thinking, decisiveness, lack of emotionalism, and intellectual superiority.

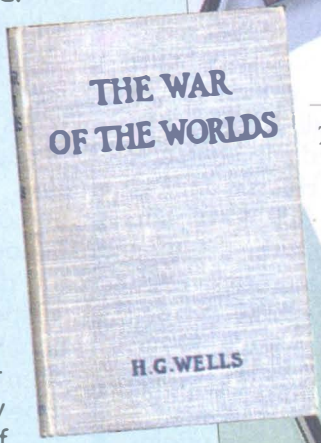


Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



Why is 'The War of the Worlds,' a model for science fiction stories?

'The War of the Worlds,' is one of the most terrifying science fiction novels ever penned. Written by H.G. Wells, and published in 1898, the novel begins with a series of strange flashes in the distant night sky, that herald an invasion from Mars.



The War of the Worlds

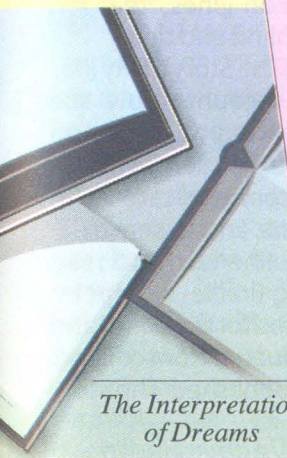
The Martian attack initially causes little concern on Earth. Then the destruction erupts– ten massive aliens roam England and destroy everything in their path with heat rays. Very soon, humankind finds itself on the brink of extinction. 'War of the Worlds,' tells a completely convincing story of alien invasion, and the plight of humans caught up in it. It set the trend for the science fiction stories that are enormously popular today, and raises important questions about mortality, Man's place in nature, and the evil lurking in the technological future– questions that remain urgently relevant in the 21st century.



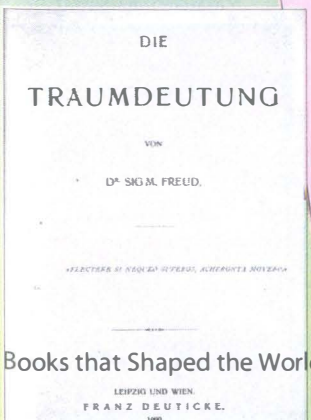
The Metamorphosis

'The Metamorphosis,' is a German classic written by Franz Kafka. Published in 1915, it is a masterful mix of horror and absurdity. The story revolves around a travelling salesman's bizarre transformation from man, to a man-sized insect. The book became one of the most important works of short fiction in the 20th century, and is widely taught in colleges and universities.





The Interpretation of Dreams


DIE

TRAUMDEUTUNG

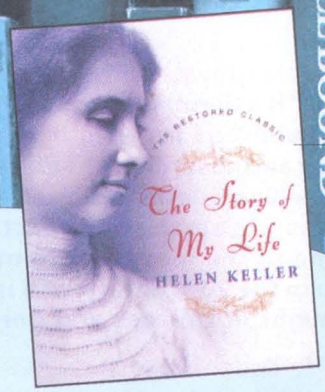
VON

Dr. SIG M. FREUD.

LEIPZIG UND WIEN.
FRANZ DEUTICKE.

Why does 'The Interpretation of Dreams,' play a key role in the field of psychology?

'The Interpretation of Dreams,' is the work of Sigmund Freud, who is universally considered the 'father' of psychoanalysis. In this book, which was published in 1899, Freud analyzes his own dreams as examples to prove his new theory of the psychology of dreams. He put forward the theory that all dreams represent the fulfilment of a wish on the part of the dreamer, and maintains that even anxiety dreams and nightmares are expressions of unconscious desires. He also believed that dreams often reflect the traumas of childhood, and that people or objects appearing in dreams are symbolic of something else. The book has become classic text on dream analysis and interpretation, and has introduced many key concepts that would later become central to psychoanalysis.



The Story of My Life

Why is 'Up from Slavery,' an inspirational autobiography?

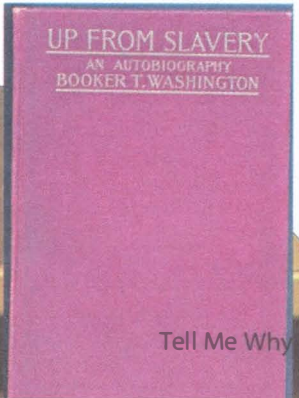
'Up from Slavery,' by Booker T. Washington is a book that describes his rise from a poor, uneducated slave to the head of an institution, that helped other African Americans to learn a skill, and improve their status in life. Booker himself was born as a slave on a plantation in 1856. He toiled in the coal mines, and packed salt as a child. However, he was determined to educate himself, which he did by studying at night. Finally, he rose to become the head of an institution that helped others like him. He believed that education was the key to improving economic conditions. His life, and the book he wrote about it, became an inspiration for other downtrodden African Americans, and drew national attention to their plight.

Why is Helen Keller's 'The Story of My Life,' a shining light for disabled ones?

Helen Keller was born in 1880. When she was a baby, she was stricken with an illness that left her blind and deaf.

In 'The Story of My life,' she recounts how she slowly learnt to rely on her other senses, both to communicate with others, and to sense nature. She learnt to read using Braille- a script invented for the blind-and graduated from college. She published 'The Story

Up From Slavery



of My Life,' in 1903, and became a tireless crusader for the disabled, and the underprivileged. Is it any wonder that her book has become a shining light for disabled people all over the world? She proved, through her extraordinary transformation, that disability was not a bar to education, or to the joys of leading a normal, productive life.

Why is 'The Call of the Wild,' both entertaining and thought provoking?

'The Call of the Wild' is a story set in the Alaskan wilderness. The author, John London, narrates a classic tale of survival from the viewpoint of an animal, the sled dog Buck. Buck's life and death struggle for survival in the bleak, hostile, icy Arctic environment makes for gripping reading. It's also symbolic of the struggle of the working classes against the odds stacked up against them in a capitalistic society.

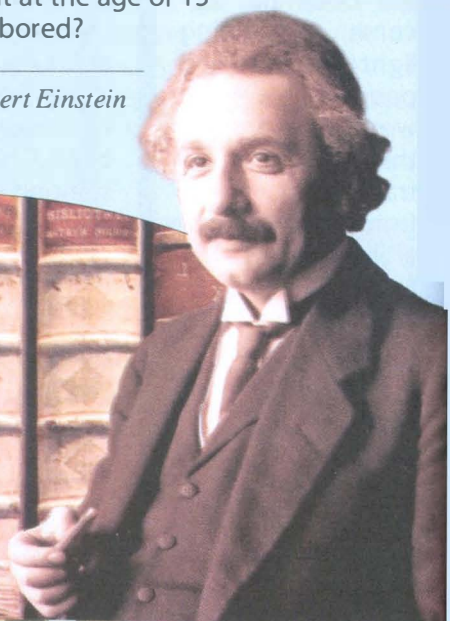
Published in 1903, 'The Call of the Wild,' was based on the authors own adventures, and it highlights the sharp contrast between the pristine beauty of the Arctic, and the dreary conditions of the English slums in London which had visited shortly before he wrote the book. 'The Call of the Wild,' was an instant hit with readers of all ages... and remains so to this day.



Why did Einstein write 'The Special and General Theory of Relativity'?

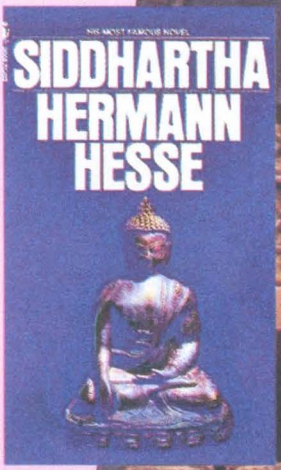
Albert Einstein, one of the greatest physicists the world has ever seen, is the author of 'Relativity: The Special and General Theory'. The work was published in 1916, and in it, Einstein attempts to explain the complex principles of his Theory of Relativity in terms simple enough for a layman to understand. Einstein's work created new branches of study in physics and revolutionized astronomy. Einstein's theories of relativity have not only affected our daily lives in such basic ways as how we heat our homes, reach our destinations, and measure our days, but the theories were also used by philosophers, politicians, and activists to turn moral philosophy upside-down. Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1921. Did you know that this brilliant mathematician and physicist got only poor grades in school, and dropped out at the age of 15 because he was bored?

Albert Einstein



Why did 'Siddhartha,' lead to an increased interest in Eastern religions?

'Siddhartha,' by Hermann Hesse is the story of a young man who leaves his family for a contemplative life. He then gets restless, and discards it for one of the flesh. He conceives a son, but bored and sickened by lust and greed, moves on again. Near despair, Siddhartha comes to a river where he hears a unique sound. This sound signals the true beginning of his life - the beginning of suffering, rejection, peace, and, finally, wisdom. A mystical and lyrical book, Siddhartha is a beautiful story of a truly personal quest towards the self-fulfilment we all must strive to attain.

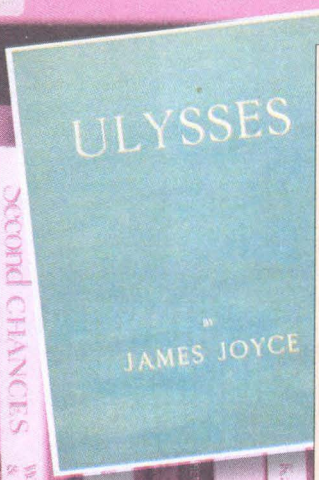


The story is set in India, and the book sparked an interest in Eastern religions when it was published in 1922. Siddhartha is one of the names of the historical Gautama Buddha, and while the life of Hesse's character resembles that of his historical counterpart to some extent, Siddhartha is by no means a fictional life of Buddha and his teachings.



The Waste Land

'The Waste Land,' is perhaps the most discussed long poem of the 20th century. Written by T.S.Eliot, it deals with the decline of civilization, and the impossibility of recovering meaning in life. Made up of 434 lines, 'The Waste Land' is a disturbing poem, marked by the hundreds of allusions and quotations from other texts.



Why is 'Ulysses,' a ground breaking masterpiece?

Ulysses is a modernist novel, written by James Joyce and published in 1922. It is an extremely long story that is funny, sorrowful, and even suspenseful. Ulysses details the lives of three ordinary people during a single day. It is set in Dublin, Ireland, and involves subjects such as mythology, European history, religion, and astronomy. The book has fascinated scholars and baffled readers for decades with its dense prose, obscure puns and allusions to the characters and events of Homer's epic Greek poem 'The Odyssey'. Joyce experimented with new literary techniques in this novel. He omitted punctuations, exhibited frank expressions, and made free use of fragmented idea to create a truly groundbreaking masterpiece.



CURIOUS FACT

Two Moons

Jonathan Swift, the author of 'Gulliver's Travels', wrote about two moons that circle Mars. What is amazing is that he described them exactly! A hundred years later, the two moons of Mars, Phobos and Deimos, were discovered by Asaph Hall, Sr. on August 12th, 1877, and they matched Swift's description in every way!



Why can 'Mein Kampf,' be said to be responsible for 50 million deaths?

'Mein Kampf,' was written by Adolf Hitler, and is an autobiographical account of his youth and rise within the Nazi Party of Germany. In it, he elaborated on his beliefs on race, politics, and the future of the German people. The book reflects his plan to create a master Aryan race by destroying those whom he viewed as the inferior races- including the Jews. Published in two volumes in 1925 and 1927, 'Mein Kampf,' became the political manifesto of the Nazi Party. In the book, Hitler justified the military conquest of foreign lands in the interests of creating a master race. The book was not taken seriously at first, but in the end, the ideas Hitler put forward in the book led to World War II. It was the most destructive of wars, and it caused the death of 50 million people, including millions of Jews who were killed on the basis of their race alone.



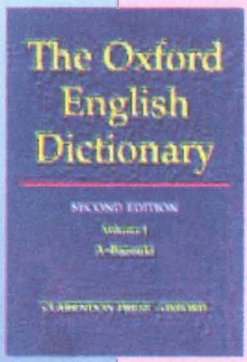
'Book'

'The English word 'book' comes from the Danish word for book which is 'bog'. 'Bog' is Danish for birch tree, and the early people of Denmark wrote on birch bark. The Latin word for book is 'liber,' and it refers to the thin layer found between the bark and the wood which was called liber, on which the Romans wrote before they started using parchment.

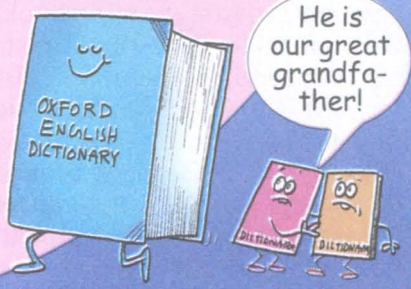


Why is the 'Oxford English Dictionary,' a treasure house of the English language?

'The Oxford English Dictionary,' is the authority on the history of the English language from 1150, to the present day. It not only records and defines all the words ever used in the English language, but also illustrates how each word has been used at the various stages of its history. Containing over 600,000 words and 2,500,000 quotations, the 'Oxford English Dictionary,' is without doubt a treasure-house of the English language.



The dictionary had its origins in the 1850's when it was first proposed by the Philological Society of London. The project got underway in 1879, with a Scottish Professor named Murray as the principal editor. Murray and his team did manage to publish the first part in 1884. Over the next four decades, work on the Dictionary continued, and new editors joined the project. Sadly, Murray did not live to see the completion of his great work. In April 1928, the last volume was published under the imposing name 'A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles'. It contained over 400,000 words and phrases in ten volumes. It has been constantly updated and modernized until it has reached its present form , making it a living document.





Why is 'All Quiet on the Western Front' an unusual book?

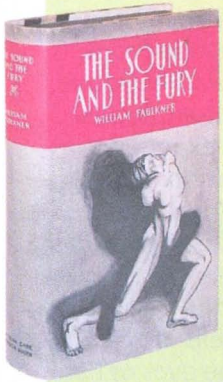
'All Quiet on the Western Front,' is a novel by Erich Maria Remarque, published in 1929. Remarque based the book on his own experience as a young infantryman in the German army during World War I. His purpose in writing the novel was 'to report on a generation that was destroyed by the war–even when it escaped the shells'. The story is about a lost generation, as seen through the eyes of Paul Baumer, a nineteen-year-old German volunteer, during the last two years of World War I. The book alternates between periods at the Western front and peaceful interludes, gory battles, and scenes of young comrades passing time together, episodes in the field hospital, and at home on furlough. The novel is unusual in that it is written in the form of a series of short episodes–in the first person, and in present tense. This gives it the feel of a diary, with entries on everyday life interspersed with horrifying battle episodes. More than a million copies of the book were sold in Germany the first year it appeared, followed by millions more when translated and distributed in other nations.



CURIOUS FACT

The Tin Drum

Gunter Grass speaks for a generation of Germans who grew up during the Nazi era. His debut novel, The Tin Drum (1959), took the literary world by storm. It's the story of Oskar Matzerath, who communicates largely through his toy Tin Drum.

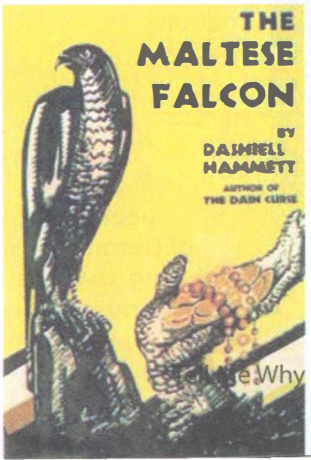


Why is 'The Sound and the Fury,' a different type of book?

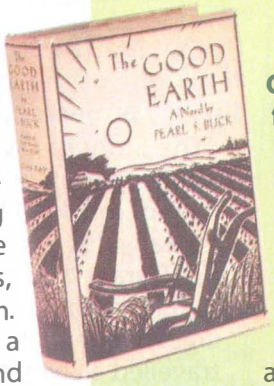
'The Sound and the Fury,' by William Faulkner is the story of a decaying aristocratic family. It is set in Mississippi after the Civil War. The story is told from four different perspectives, each making up a different section with a different narrator. The first three sections are narrated by three Compson brothers – Benjamin, Quentin, and Jason – followed by a section by an omniscient narrator. The cast of deeply troubled characters–darling and daring Caddy, innocent Benjy, tyrannical Jason, and tortured Quentin have haunted readers for decades. Faulkner, one of the most influential of 20th century writers, casts aside traditional aspects of a novel like plot and character development, and instead experiments with several new literary techniques. As a result, 'The Sound and Fury,' attains heights and depths of expression that are truly breathtaking.

Why is 'The Maltese Falcon,' a different type of detective story?

'The Maltese Falcon,' was written by Dashiell Hammett in 1931, and it became extremely popular because, it was a different type of detective story. The novel was created out of the author's own memorable background. He too had worked as a detective for six years, travelling across the country on different assignments. The hero of 'The Maltese Falcon,' is a detective, named Sam Spade. Unlike earlier detectives in fiction who were modelled after Sherlock Holmes, Spade was a hardboiled detec-



tive who did not deliberately break the law, but was not above cutting corners. He had no hesitation in manipulating anyone, including the police and his clients, to arrive at the truth. Hammett wrote in a terse ironic style, and the numerous twists and turns of his plot captivated readers, and influenced authors of other detective novels.



Why did 'The Good Earth,' influence Western attitudes towards China?

Pearl Buck, the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1938, wrote 'The Good Earth,' from her first hand experience of life, in China. She had lived there most of her life and her novel provided insights into the lives of rich Chinese land owners as well as the poor Chinese peasants. It is the story of the ups and downs in the life of a poor peasant farmer who rises to become a prosperous landlord- and it completely changed the way the Western world viewed China. Till then, China had been a land of philosophers and scholars to the west, and they knew nothing about the everyday lives of the common people. The book had a tremendous impact on readers - and is still popular today- for the glimpses it provides into the evolving culture of the vast Chinese empire.



Most Valuable Children's Book

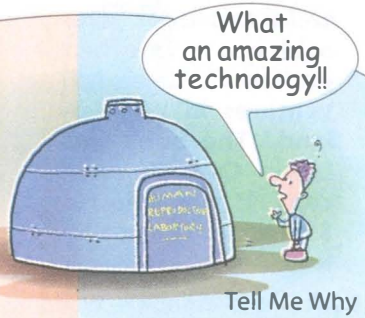
The most valuable children's book ever sold was a rare first edition of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.' The book was Lewis Carroll's own copy. It was sold for $1.5 million at an auction.

Why is 'The Brave New World', a warning against uncontrolled technological advances?

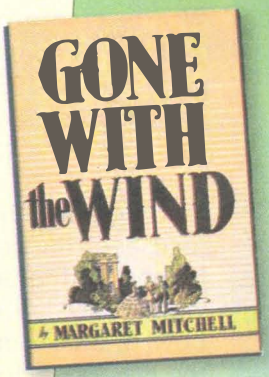
'The Brave New World,' by Aldous Huxley was written at a time in the early 1930's when great advances were being made in science. In 'The Brave New World,' he alerted people to the problems that technology could cause, including overpopulation and psychological brain washing. The novel is about a frightening society, where humans are reproduced in laboratories to perform certain roles. Those who did not conform were cast out. Religion was banned in this society, and mind altering drugs allowed the government total control over the individual. Today, his words seem prophetic, for Huxley has warned us that technology must be used for the good of mankind, or it will lead to its destruction.

Why was 'The Story of Civilization,' one of the most ambitious of literary projects?

'The Story of Civilization,' is an eleven volume narrative tracing the devolvement of mankind from ancient times till the early 19th century. It was written by Will Durant and his wife Ariel, and the couple spent 40 years writing all the volumes, working 8 to 14 hours a day. They travelled all over the world, researching material for their work, which became the most ambitious literary project ever undertaken. Durant paints each historical character as a real human being, with the complexities of character we all have. While he doesn't make excuses for villains of history, he makes sure he humanizes each person mentioned. Here history is presented not as chronology, and not as a sequence of events, but as a progression of people. Some of the volumes are more than 1000 pages in length, but the story is told in such an entertaining and colourful manner that the readers are entranced, and never bored.



Why is 'Gone With the Wind,' a valuable work?



'Gone with the Wind,' is a historical romance set in northern Georgia during the drama of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era. It traces the life of Scarlett O'Hara and her relationships with Rhett Butler, and Ashley and Melanie Wilkes. The novel addresses such themes as survival, romantic love, and the society's structuring of gender and class. With its detailed atmosphere of a vanished age and its compelling characters, 'Gone with the Wind,' continues to entertain readers to this day.

Published in 1936, 'Gone with the Wind,' became an immediate best-seller, bringing first-time novelist Margaret Mitchell an overwhelming amount of public appreciation- and the 1937 Pulitzer Prize. As well as being a novel of epic proportions, this is valuable as a historical document too. It is a depiction of life in the 19th century South, and also documents 20th century emotions about the region's past, and memories of a way of life that many considered had gone with the wind.



Book of a Million Poems

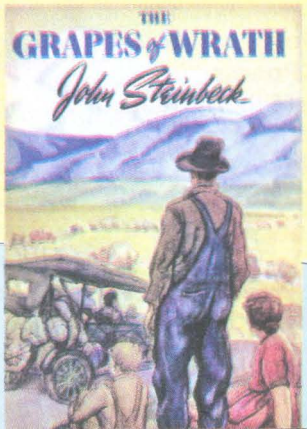
The Book of a Million Poems was written by the French poet Raymond Queneau. It has only ten pages with fourteen lines on each page. Every single page is cut into strips, containing a sonnet. These can be read combining fragments at your personal will. Any line from a sonnet can be combined with any, from the other nine, giving a million different poems!



Raymond Queneau

Why did 'Grapes of Wrath,' create an uproar?

When 'Grapes of Wrath' by John Steinbeck was published in 1939, America was still recovering from the Great Depression. The book created a national sensation for its depiction of the devastating effects of the Great Depression of the 1930's. It exposed the misery, abuses and injustice that migrant workers had to suffer during this period. The story focuses on the trials and tribulations of the Joad family when they leave the dust bowl of Oklahoma for a better life in California. Many people were shocked by the poverty and hopelessness of the story. It created quite an uproar, and Steinbeck found himself immersed in a great national debate over the migrant labour problem. Amidst the controversy, people who had never read a book before bought a copy, and libraries had waiting lists for the novel that were months long!



Why is 'The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care,' popular with new parents to this day?

'The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care,' was written by a famous paediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock. The author of eleven books, he was a political activist for causes that vitally affect children. These include topics like day care, schooling, housing, and medical care for all. The book covers everything from preconception to teen hood. Spock answers the most elemental stuff - care and feeding, diapering and

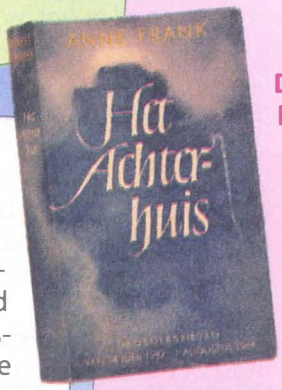
Super Book



Weighing 1060 kilograms, with 304 pages that are 3.85 metres wide and 2.77 metres tall... photographer Ayman Trawi's book holds the largest book's record.

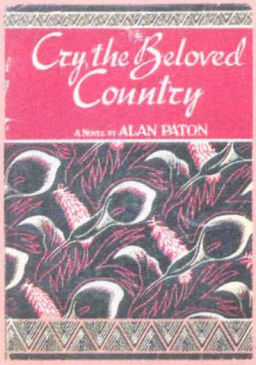
health issues, and how to answer those tough questions from your toddler. Baby and Child Care has been translated into thirty-nine languages, and has sold fifty million copies worldwide since its first publication in 1946.





Why is 'The Diary of Anne Frank,' so moving?

'The Diary of Anne Frank,, written by a young Jewish girl, Anne Frank, is a powerful reminder of the horrors of war and an eloquent testament to the human spirit. In 1942, with Nazis occupying Holland, a thirteen-year-old Jewish girl Anne and her family fled their home in Amsterdam and went into hiding. For the next two years, until their whereabouts were betrayed, they and another family lived cloistered in the 'secret annex' of an old office building. Anne's diary is her one true friend and confidant. In it, she records the thoughts of a typical teen. Anne Frank recorded vivid impressions of her experiences during this period. By turns thoughtful, moving, and amusing, her account offers a fascinating commentary on human courage.



Cry, the Beloved Country

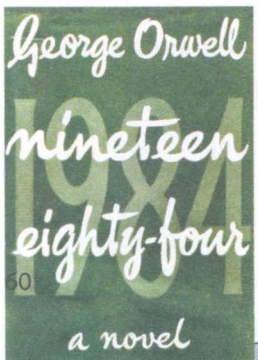
Why is 'Cry, the Beloved Country,' the most important novel in South Africa's history?

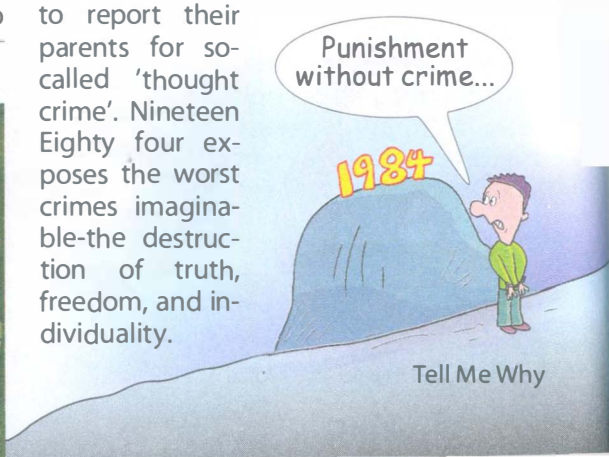
Cry, the beloved Country is the most important novel in South Africa's history. This impassioned novel by Alan Paton is about a black man's country under white man's law. When it was written, South Africa was bitterly divided by segregation and prejudice. Power was in the hands of the minority whites, while the blacks suffered poverty and humiliation. This book gained international acclaim when it was published in 1948.

Why is 'Nineteen Eighty Four,' a thought provoking story?

Nineteen Eightyfour is a prophetic book written by George Orwell in 1949. The main character in the novel is a man called Winston Smith, who lives in a totalitarian state, which makes up most of the English-speaking world. In this world, everything is controlled by the Party and Big Brother. Citizens are at all times watched through the ever-present telescreen, which cannot be turned off. Everyone lives in constant fear of doing something that might get reported to the Thought Police. Citizens are encouraged to spy on each other, and children are taught to report their parents for so-called 'thought crime'. Nineteen Eighty four exposes the worst crimes imaginable-the destruction of truth, freedom, and individuality.

Ninteen Eighty Four

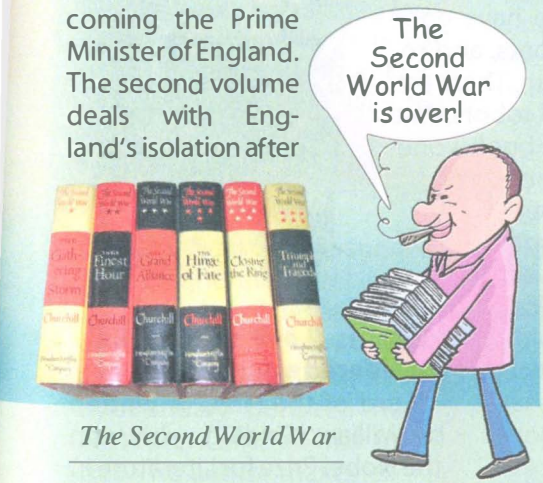




Why is Winston Churchill's 'The Second World War,' remarkable?

'The Second World War,' was written by Winston Churchill, a British statesman and leader of historic proportions, who also possessed substantial literary talents. It is a first hand account of World War II, and was published in six volumes over a six year period.

The first volume deals with the rise of Adolf Hitler, and ends with Churchill becoming the Prime Minister of England. The second volume deals with England's isolation after



The Second World War

the fall of France, while the third, fourth and fifth volumes describe the progress of the war from 1941 to the eve of D Day. The final volume portrays the conclusion of the war, and ironically, how Churchill himself was not in power for its ultimate end. The book is remarkable in that, a man who presided over this crisis in history is able to turn his experiences into literature.





Somerset Maugham

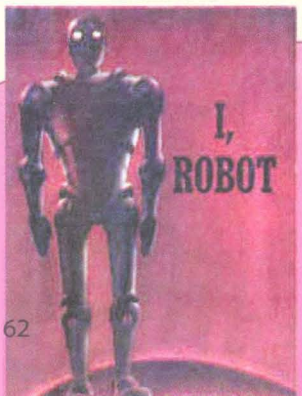
BestTen

The world famous writer Somerset Maugham selected the following as the ten best novels of the world:

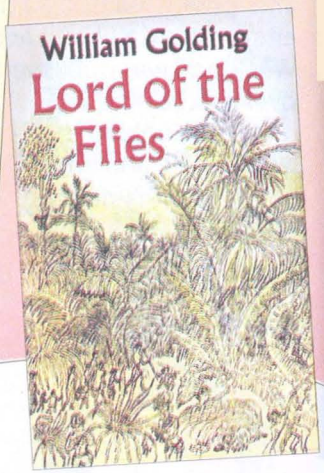
1. War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy
2. Pere Goriot by Honore de Balzac
3. Tom Jones by Henry Fielding
4. Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen
5. The Red and the Black by Stendhal
6. Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte
7. Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert
8. David Copperfield by Charles Dickens
9. The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky
10. Moby Dick by Herman Melville

Why is Isaac Asimov's 'I, Robot,' unusual?

Isaac Asimov chronicles the development of the robot through a series of interlinked stories in his book , 'I, Robot'. The book is a collection of short stories linked by an interview between a reporter and a scientist. It traces the development of robots from its primitive origins to its ultimate perfection in the not-so-distant future. The stories include tales of robots who have gone mad, of mind-reading robots, and robots with a sense of humour. There are also robot politicians, and robots that secretly run the world. The book is one of the great classics of science fiction in which Asimov set out the principles of robot behaviour that we know as the Three Laws of Robotics. The stories are all told with the dramatic blend of science fact and science fiction that has made Asimov such a popular author.



Lord of the Flies



Why is 'Lord of the Flies,' considered a dark novel?

'Lord of the Flies,' is written by William Golding, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983. The book is based on his horror at the atrocities committed by the Nazis during World War II. 'Lord of the Flies,' is set at a time when Europe is in the midst of nuclear destruction. The story is about group of boys, who are being evacuated from England to Australia, and crash land on



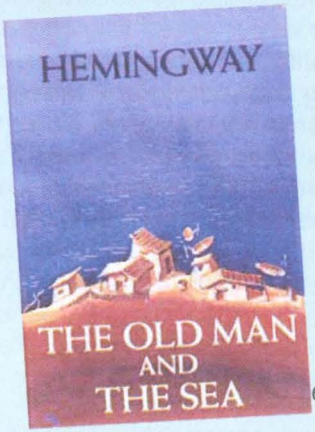
A Huge Book

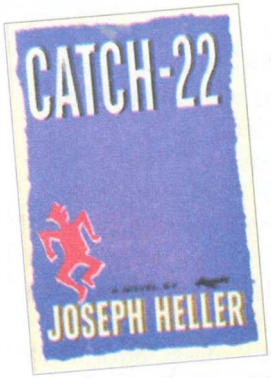
The Klencke Atlas, which stands at 1.78 by 1.05 metres when open, is recognized in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's largest atlas. It was presented to Charles II on his restoration to the British throne, by a group of Dutch merchants led by Johannes Klencke. It is so big that six people are needed to lift it, and another two to open it!

tropical island. No adults survive the crash, and the novel is the story of the boys' descent into chaos, disorder, and evil. Golding's gripping novel explores the boundary between human reason and animal instinct. The author makes extensive use of symbolism, and the dark tone of the novel is chilling. His writing style is simple, but the subject matter is deep. He uses a rather comparatively simple story to convey a weighty idea and tries to teach us and warn us of the evil nature of mankind.

Why is 'The Old Man and the Sea,' a classic fish tale?

The Old Man and the Sea is a classic written by Earnest Hemmingway, and published in 1952. Told in language of great simplicity and power, it is the story of an old Cuban fisherman, down on his luck, and his supreme ordeal - a relentless, agonizing battle with a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream. Hemmingway uses a strikingly contemporary and stark writing style to expand on the theme of courage in the face of defeat, and of personal triumph won from loss. The Old Man and the Sea revived Ernest Hemingway's career, which was foundering, and is in fact, a fish tale that honours its author.





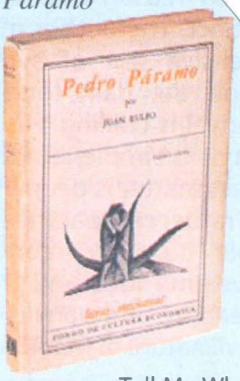
Why is it said that Heller's 'Catch 22,' reflects the sentiments of a generation?

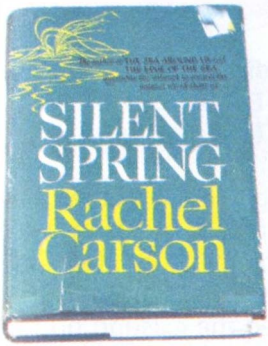
'Catch 22,' by Joseph Heller is an anti war novel, that reflected the sentiments of a generation after World War II. Heller himself flew sixty missions in Europe during the War, and his experiences deeply affected his outlook on life. The novel skillfully projects the absurd circumstances of life among the America military during World War II. It is the story of a US airman's attempts to survive the madness of the Second World War, shortly after returning from the conflict himself. Using satire, black humour, and seemingly undefeatable logic, the book argues that war is insane, that the military is insane, and that, quite probably, modern life itself is insane too. It was so popular that, today the phrase 'Catch 22,' refers to a situation in which any move that a person can make will lead to trouble.

Why is 'Pedro Paramo,' a one of a kind book?

Pedro Paramo was published in 1955 by Juan Rolfo and has since become one of Latin America's most read books. It is a dream-like tale, which intertwines a man's quest to find his lost father with the father's obsessive love for a woman. In the book ,Rulfo uses straight forward narration, moving from conscious thought to memory, from the world of the living, to the world of the dead. ,Pedro Paramo,' captures the essence of life in rural Mexico during the last years of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, like no other work of fiction. Here, in a mere 124 pages, the author vividly portrays the radical social and economic changes which spurred the dramatic

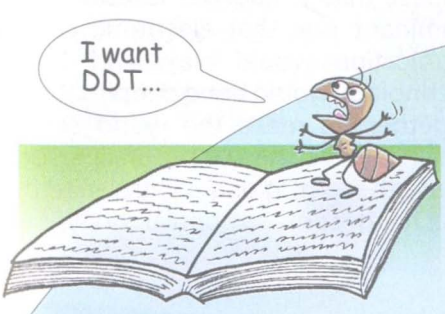
Pedro Paramo





Why is it said that 'Silent Spring', launched an environmental movement?

'Silent Spring', by Rachael Carson was released in 1962. It offered the first shattering look at widespread dangers of the overuse of pesticides, and touched off an environmental awareness that still exists. The book took four years to write. It meticulously described how DDT entered the food chain, and accumulated in the fatty tissues of animals, including human beings, and caused cancer and genetic damage. Carson concluded that DDT and other pesticides had irrevocably harmed birds and animals, and had contaminated the entire world food supply. Carson, a native of rural Pennsylvania, had grown up with an enthusiasm for nature matched only by her love of writing and poetry. Her book 'Silent Spring', proved to be the springboard for an environmental movement that led to tougher government controls over the use of pesticides.



migration of the peasants from ranchos and villages to the urban slums, when they could no longer live off the land, nor find work. It is a shadowy, eerie, haunting work, and one whose impact on literature cannot be over-emphasized.



An Expensive Book

'The Task,' by Tomas Alexander Hartmann has only 13 pages, but is priced at 153 Million Euros! This makes it one of the most expensive books in the world. The author explained that its value stands in its content, for the book offers answers to some fundamental questions of humankind in less than three hundred sentences.



Marshall McLuhan

Why did 'Understanding Media- The Extensions of Man,' challenge old ideas in mass communication?

Understanding Media- The Extensions of Man is a path breaking work by the technology guru Marshall McLuhan. It was published in 1964, and it challenged the existing notion that the content of a message was more important than its form. McLuhan argued that the impact of a message depended on the way that it was presented, or on its form. He also believed that the medium in which the message was presented- that is, whether it was presented on radio, television, or print- also affected the impact that it had. He foresaw the dominant role that electronic communication would play, and how technology would bring people closer together, to make the world seem smaller. In fact, he was the first person to use the term 'global village,'- a term that has become so popular today.



Online Star

If you read novels online, you will be interested to know that the longest online novel is Marienbad My Love. It was written by Mark Leach in 1980, and has 17 million words. It is the story of a journalist who becomes a movie director.

Why did 'The Quotations of Chairman Mao', play a major role in influencing the history of China?



Mao Tse-tung

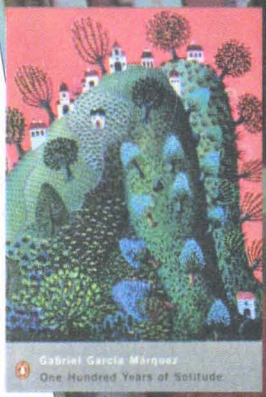
Mao Tse-tung was the great leader of the Chinese Communist Party, and the driving force of the revolution that founded The People's Republic of China. He also initiated many social and economic reforms at the cost of millions of lives. 'The Quotations of Chairman Mao' was published in 1966, and was intended to be the guidebook for the Cultural Revolution, which was Mao's dream. The book contained Mao's philosophies, and was required reading for all Chinese people. It became one of the most intensely studied books in the world, and Mao's words became the ultimate authority in China. However, after the death of Mao, his views were denounced. But his accomplishments as a leader, and founder of modern China cannot be challenged.



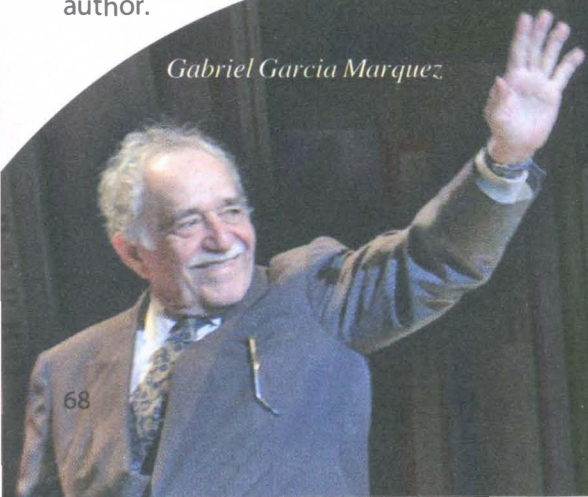
Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung

Why is 'One Hundred Years of Solitude,' the crowning achievement of Gabriel Marquez?

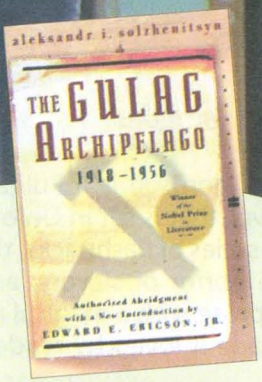
'One Hundred Years of Solitude,' tells the story of the rise and fall, birth and death of the mythical town of Macondo, through the history of a family known as the Buendía. It was published in 1967, and with this book, the author Gabriel Garcia Marquez introduced Latin American literature to the world. It is a rich and brilliant chronicle of life and death. In the story of the Buendi a family, one sees all of humanity, just as in the history, myths, growth, and decay of Macondo, one sees all of Latin America. Love and lust, war and revolution, riches and poverty, youth and senility are all portrayed with the simplicity, ease, and purity that are the mark of a master, 'One Hundred Years of Solitude,' is one of the 20th century's enduring works, and the crowning achievement of a Nobel Prize winning author.



Gabriel Garcia Marquez







Why is 'The Gulag Archipelago' important historically?

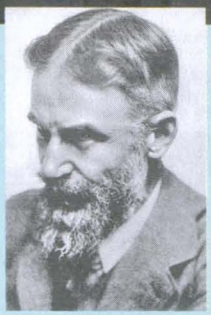
'The Gulag Archipelago', by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is an important historical document because it chronicles the imprisonment, brutalization, and very often, murder of tens of millions of innocent Soviet citizens.

This was done by the Soviet government, mostly during Stalin's rule from 1929 to 1953. Solzhenitsyn's first purpose was to document for the Soviet people, the real truth of what happened. A survivor himself, Solzhenitsyn felt obliged to do this for the sake of 'all those tortured and murdered', but even more, for living and future generations. The book was first published in France in 1973, and is a literary triumph.The word 'gulag' refers to the system of concentration camps, and Solzhenitsyn used the word 'archipelago' as a metaphor for the camps, spread throughout the Soviet Union like a chain of islands.



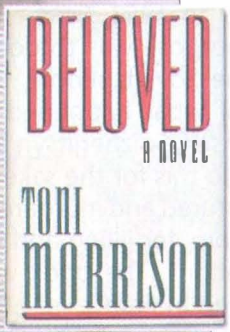
St. Joan

George Bernard Shaw, the famous English playwright, wrote a play based on the life of Joan of Arc, shortly after she was declared a saint. It was called 'Saint Joan', and over the years, it has been seen as one of his greatest, and most important works. St. Joan has been hailed as being intellectually exciting, and praised for dealing with important themes, such as nationalism and war.



Bernard Shaw

Why is Toni Morrison's book 'Beloved,' liked by readers world wide?



'Beloved,' by Toni Morrison is a Pulitzer Prize winning novel, that is set in Ohio in 1873. Through a series of flashbacks, the book reveals the horror of slavery, and combines lyrical prose with a magical realism that has made it loved by readers worldwide.

At the heart of the story is an almost unspeakable act of horror and heroism- a woman brutally kills her infant daughter rather than allow her to be enslaved. The woman is Sethe, and the novel traces her journey from slavery to freedom during, and immediately following the Civil War. Woven into this mesmerizing narrative are the terrible truths of Sethe's past. The novel is part ghost story, part history lesson, and part folk tale, and addresses the issues of black culture, history, and identity with sensitivity and beauty.

Toni Morrison



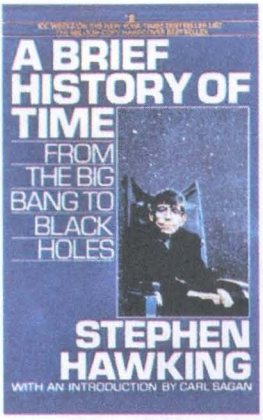
First Nobel Prize in Literature

The Nobel Prize in Literature is awarded by the Swedish Academy, Stockholm, Sweden. The very first Nobel Prize in Literature



Sully Prudhomme

was awarded in 1901 to the French poet and philosopher Sully Prudhomme, who, in his poetry, showed the 'rare combination of the qualities of both heart and intellect'.



A Brief History of Time



Why is 'A Brief History of Time,' an outstanding book?

Stephen Hawking, one of the most brilliant theoretical physicists in history, wrote the modern classic, 'A Brief History of Time,' to help non scientists understand the questions being asked by scientists today. Where did the universe come from? How, and why did it begin? Will it come to an end, and if so, how? These are the mysteries that have puzzled mankind from times immemorial, and Stephen Hawking brings us closer to the ultimate secrets at the very heart of creation, with exciting images and profound imagination. The book plunges us into the exotic realms of black holes and quarks, of antimatter and 'arrows of time', of the 'Big Bang' and a bigger God. All these complex concepts



Stephen Hawking

are explained with easy, good-natured humour, and an ability to illustrate highly complex propositions with analogies plucked from daily life that makes the book truly outstanding.

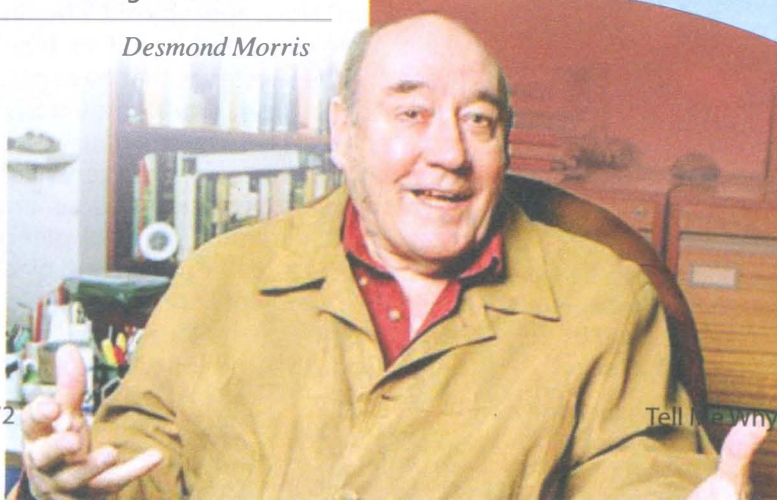
Desmond Morris

Why did 'The Naked Ape,' become so popular?

Desmond Morris wrote 'The Naked Ape,' in the late 1960's. His ideas were revolutionary at the time, and attracted a lot of attention worldwide.

According to Desmond Morris, of the 193 species of monkeys and apes, the only one that is not covered with hair is Man- hence the title 'The Naked Ape'.

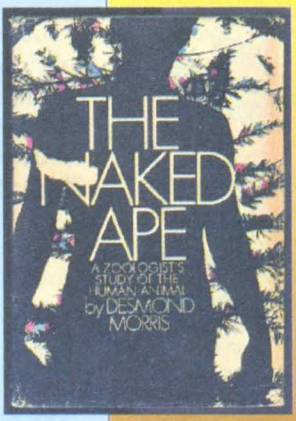
Morris, an anthropologist, studies humans from a zoological perspective, focusing on origins, behaviour, rearing, exploration, fighting, feeding, and comfort. The Naked Ape's



view that, the behaviour of humans was determined largely by their biology, and that humans share many characteristics with animals, particularly apes, was offensive to many readers, and enlightening to others.

'The Naked Ape' was first serialized in London's Daily Mirror tabloid, in which he described humans in the same objective, analytical way that zoologists describe animals.

Morris was the curator of mammals at the London Zoo, and a specialist in primates. His view of Man was that our species is best viewed as a very complicated primate.





Tomas Transtromer



2011 Nobel Prize for Literature

The 2011 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Swedish poet, Tomas Transtromer. His sometimes bleak, but graceful work explores themes of isolation, emotion and identity while remaining rooted in the common place. Mr. Transtromer, 80, has written more than 15 collections of poetry, many of which have been translated into English, and 60 other languages.



Most Successful Textbook Writer

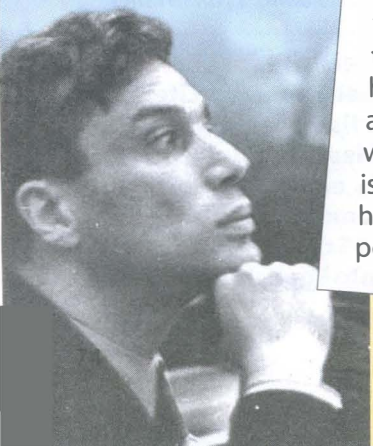
Euclid is the most successful textbook writer of all time. His 'Elements', written around 300 BC, has gone through more than 1,000 editions since the invention of printing!

● *Ranjitha Chauhan*



Doctor Zhivago

Boris Pasternak



Why does 'Doctor Zhivago' have historical significance?

'Doctor Zhivago', by Boris Pasternak is classic story of the life and loves of a poet and physician called Yuri Zhivago, during the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. The novel has historical significance as it deals with themes like socialism and Marxism, the excesses that occurred in name of revolution, and the transformation of the largest country of the world from a centuries old system into a failed ideal. Boris Pasternak has written a delightful tale whose characters are crafted from all sections of society, making this novel a representation of the whole of society at that time. The harshness of winter, the beauty of forests and fields, the man divided in his love for wife and lover, the poet in exile, the idealists seeking to change the world, Russian history and customs, are all conveyed with power and poetry that make reading this book a rewarding experience.

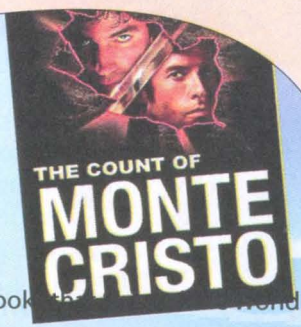
Tell Me Why



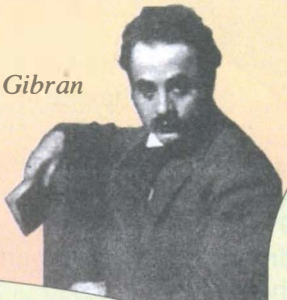
Alexandre Dumas

Why is the 'The Count of Monte Cristo,' considered one of Alexandre Dumas's best works?

'The Count of Monte Cristo,' is one of the most popular works of the famous French author Alexandre Dumas. It is an adventure story with a historical setting, and is packed with intrigue, great fight scenes, love, passion, and witty social satire. Dumas has a wonderful grasp of human nature, and a talent for rendering all the follies of Man in delightful, snappy prose. Set in Marseilles, Rome and Paris in the 19th century, it tells the story of Edmond Dantès, a young sailor who is falsely accused of treason, and imprisoned in a dungeon for 14 years. A fellow prisoner tells him where to find treasure buried on a Mediterranean island called Monte Cristo. On Dantès's escape, he acquires the treasure, gives himself the name Count of Monte Cristo, and ruthlessly goes about the slow destruction of his enemies. The book presents a vivid portrait of France from the end of the Napoleonic years to the early 1840's, and generations of readers have thrilled to Dumas's riveting, romantic tale of revenge.



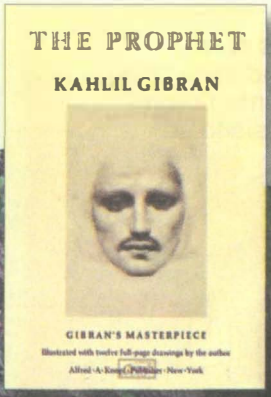




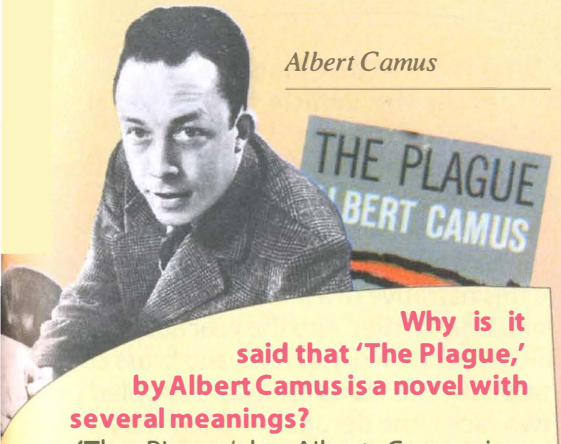
Kahlil Gibran

Why is Gibran's 'The Prophet,' the work of a genius?

Kahlil Gibran's masterpiece, 'The Prophet', is one of the most beloved classics of our time. Published in 1923, it is a collection of poetic essays that are philosophical, spiritual, and, above all, inspirational. Gibran covers topics like love, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, work, joy and sorrow, housing, clothes, buying and selling, crime and punishment, laws, freedom, reason and passion, pain, self-knowledge, teaching, friendship, talking, time, good and evil, prayer, pleasure, beauty, religion, and death. Poet, philosopher, and artist, Kahlil Gibran was born in Lebanon. Millions of Arabic-speaking peoples familiar with his writings in that language consider him the genius of his age. He was a man whose fame and influence spread far beyond the country of his birth. 'The Prophet,' is loved by readers all over the world, who find in it, an expression of the deepest impulses of Man's heart and mind.



Gibran's Home in Bsharri



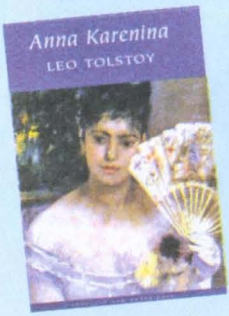
Albert Camus

Why is it said that 'The Plague,' by Albert Camus is a novel with several meanings?

'The Plague' by Albert Camus is a haunting tale of the triumph of the human spirit in the face of unrelieved horror. The novel deals with an epidemic of bubonic plague that takes place in the Algerian port city of Oran. When the plague first arrives, the residents are slow to recognize the mortal danger they are in. Once they do become aware of it, they must decide what measures they will take to fight the deadly disease. 'The Plague,' was first published in France in 1947, three years after the end of World War II. The novel has several meanings. On one level, it refers to the German occupation of France from 1940 to 1944, which cut France off from the outside world, just as in the novel, the town of Oran must close its gates to isolate the plague. The plague may also be understood as the presence of moral evil, or simply, as a symbol of the nature of the human condition. In short, 'The Plague' is Camus's brilliant allegory of the spread of fascism.

Anna Karenina

Leo Tolstoy's classic novel Anna Karenina tells of the love affair between Anna and Count Vronsky. Anna rejects her passionless marriage and is forced to endure the hypocrisies of society. Set against a vast and richly textured



canvas of the nineteenth-century Russia, the novel's seven major characters create a dynamic imbalance, playing out the contrasts of city and country life and all the variations on love and family happiness. First published in 1877.

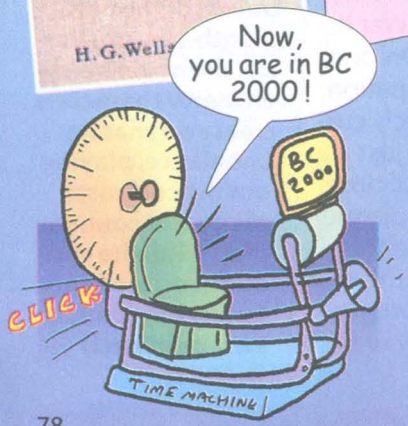


H.G. Wells



Why is 'The Time Machine,' by H.G. Wells the vehicle for his social and political ideas?

'The Time Machine' is a science fiction classic, and H.G. Wells, the author, was a pioneer of such novels. In this work, Wells put forward his social and political ideas in this narrative of a nameless time traveller who is hurtled into the year 802,701 by his elaborate ivory, crystal, and brass contraption. The world he finds is peopled by two races- the decadent Eloi, fluttery and useless, are dependant for food, clothing, and shelter on the simian subterranean Morlocks, who prey on them. The two races symbolize Wells's vision of the eventual result of unchecked capitalism. 'The Time Machine,' is considered by many to be one of the finest works of English fiction. This highly entertaining novel has had an enormous influence on English fiction in general, and science fiction in particular.





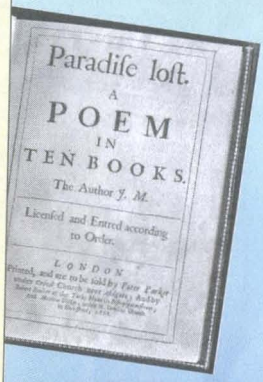
CURIOUS FACT

Survival by Chance

Several of Aristotle's writings have survived only by a fortunate chance. Around 80 BC, the men of a Roman army invading Asia Minor found a number of manuscripts of Aristotle's works in a pit, and

Why is 'Paradise Lost,' a gift to the English Language?

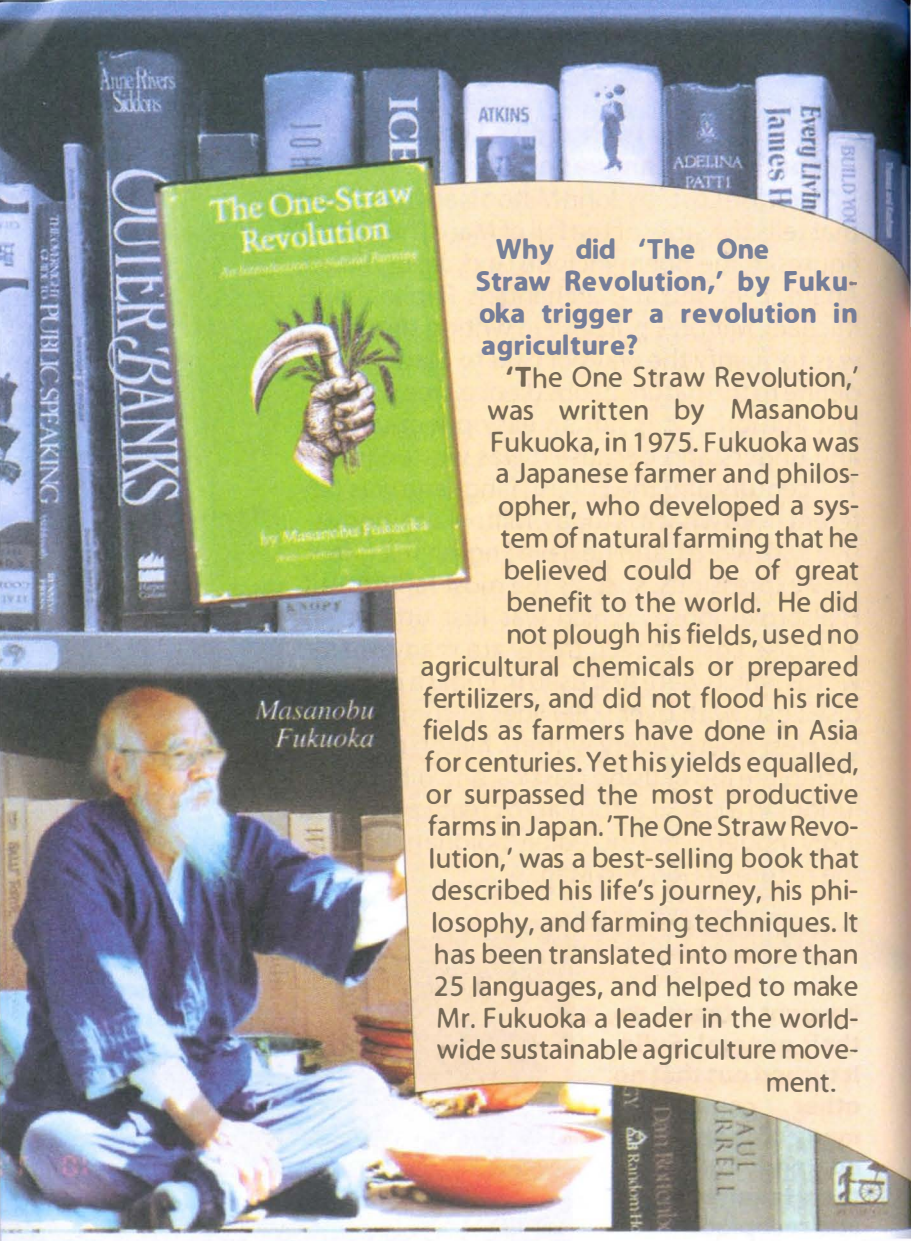
'Paradise Lost,' by John Milton is an epic poem that tells the story of the fall of Man. The central figures in the poem include God, Jesus, Satan, Adam, Eve, and the archangels Raphael and Michael. Milton's purpose in writing the poem was to 'justify the ways of God to Man,' and to define to the nature of obedience, free will, and just authority. It is not an easy poem to read and understand because it was written in the 17th century and the English language was different from what it is today. Milton was innovative with words, and he gave English the gift of new expressions, such as the most famous 'all Hell broke loose', which was first uttered in 'Paradise Lost'. In fact, there are many, many words which were first used in English in 'Paradise Lost,' with over 9000 lines of some of the greatest poetry every written, Milton does an incredible job of using classical and biblical allusions in a classical format to create a surprisingly modern, and incredibly poignant look at the nature of God and Man.



Paradise Lost

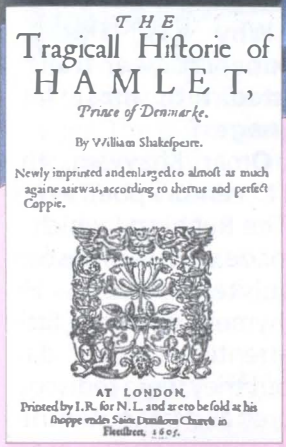
brought them to their general, Sulla. It turned out that no other copies of many of them existed, and Sulla had them taken to Rome and recopied.





Why did 'The One Straw Revolution,' by Fukuoka trigger a revolution in agriculture?

'The One Straw Revolution,' was written by Masanobu Fukuoka, in 1975. Fukuoka was a Japanese farmer and philosopher, who developed a system of natural farming that he believed could be of great benefit to the world. He did not plough his fields, used no agricultural chemicals or prepared fertilizers, and did not flood his rice fields as farmers have done in Asia for centuries. Yet his yields equalled, or surpassed the most productive farms in Japan. 'The One Straw Revolution,' was a best-selling book that described his life's journey, his philosophy, and farming techniques. It has been translated into more than 25 languages, and helped to make Mr. Fukuoka a leader in the worldwide sustainable agriculture movement.


THE
Tragicall Hiſtorie of
HAMLET,
Prince of Denmarke.
By William Shakeſpeare.
Newly imprinted and enlarged to almoſt as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie.
AT LONDON
Printed by I. R. for N. L. and are to be ſold at his ſhoppe vnder Saint Dunſtons Church in Fleetſtreet. 1605.

Hamlet

Why is 'Hamlet,' one of Shakespeare's greatest plays?

'Hamlet,' is without question, the most famous play in the English language. Probably written in 1601 or 1602, the tragedy is a masterpiece of the famous English playwright William Shakespeare. The heart of the story is the hero's struggle with two opposing forces- moral integrity and the need to avenge his father's murder. The play has all the ingredients for a gripping story, including revenge and power, love and betrayal, dramatic sword fights and dark spooky scenes. It is truly a supremely rich and complex literary work that continues to delight both readers and audiences with its myriad meanings and interpretations. 'Hamlet' is Shakespeare's longest play, and among the most powerful and influential tragedies in the English language.



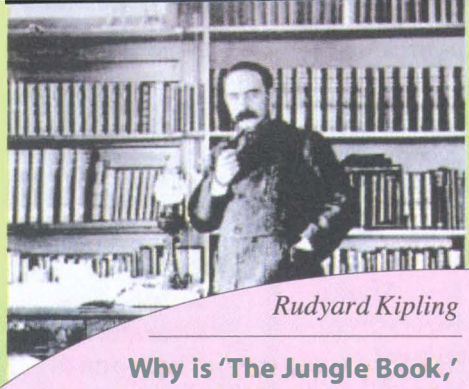
Burnt Literature

Virgil, one of the great Roman poets, left instructions that, upon his death, his manuscript of 'The Aeneid,' should be burnt, because he had not been able to polish it!

● *Sneha Rao*

Bust of Virgil





Rudyard Kipling

Why is 'The Jungle Book,' by Rudyard Kipling popular with readers of all ages?

'The Jungle Book' is a collection of stories written by the British Nobel Laureate, Rudyard Kipling. The tales in the book are fables, using animals, and are presented in such a manner as to give moral lessons. The themes of 'The Jungle Book,' revolve around noble qualities such as loyalty, honour, courage, tradition, integrity, and persistence. Among the most famous are the stories of Mowgli, a 'man-cub' raised by wolves in the Indian jungle; that of Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, a heroic mongoose; and 'Toomai of the Elephants', the story of a young elephant-handler. Interspersed with numerous poems 'The Jungle Book' is regarded as an immortal classic which will enchant and educate readers both young and old.

Why has 'The Rubaiyat' been translated into most languages?

Omar Khayyam, the 11th century poet, wrote 'The Rubaiyat,' which is made up of the most exquisite verses. His rhymes received little attention in their day, but they were rediscovered and translated into beautiful English, more than seven centuries later, by a gentleman and scholar named Edward FitzGerald.

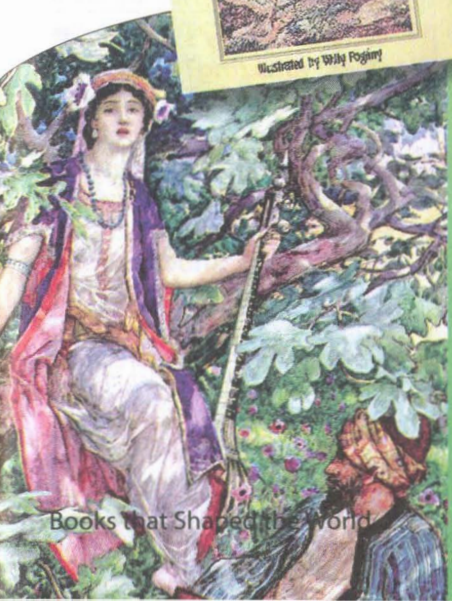
The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam then became immensely popular world-



wide, and was translated into most languages. The poem presents the deep feelings and emotions of the poet on a variety of subjects such as death, love and religion in four line stanzas that were known as 'rubai,' in Farsi, the language of the poet.



The Rubaiyat



CURIOUS FACT

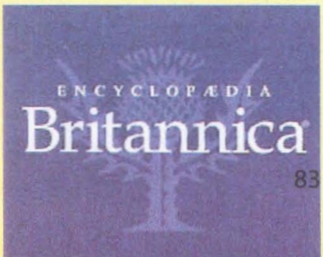
Mother of all Recipes

The first volume of recipes was published in 62 AD by the Roman Apicius. Titled 'De Re Coquinaria,' it described the feasts enjoyed by the Emperor Claudius.

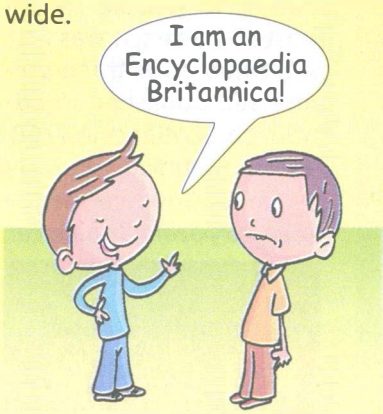
Why is the 'Encyclopaedia Britannica' important in our lives?

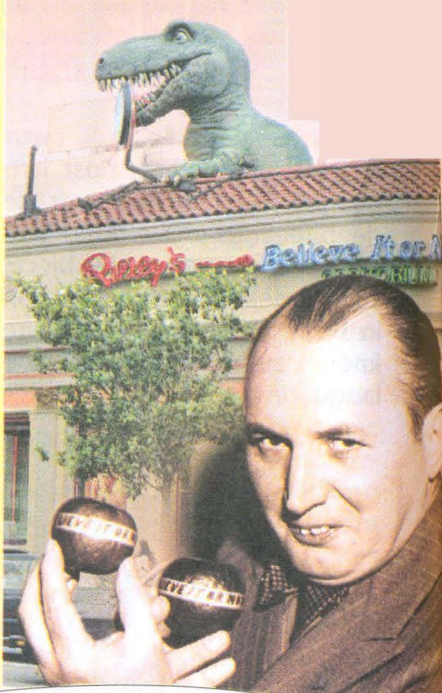
The Encyclopaedia Britannica is, without doubt, the most comprehensive encyclopaedia in the world. It has been providing knowledge and information to people for almost 250 years. It was first published as a three-volume set, published in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1768. The Britannica quickly

Encyclopaedia Britannica



grew in size and reputation in the years that followed, and soon boasted articles by eminent scholars. The ownership of Britannica passed to two Americans in 1901, and printing was moved to the States in 1929, but its engagement with the world's foremost scholars and experts continued. Today, it is written and continuously updated by about 100 full-time editors, and more than 4,000 expert contributors. Readers can access quick facts or immerse themselves in detailed articles on almost any subject imaginable, while enjoying the vivid and beautiful images of art, geography, science, sports, and much more, making the Encyclopaedia Britannica the leader in reference, education, and learning worldwide.





Ripley

Why is 'Ripley's Believe It or Not,' amazing?

'Ripley's Believe It or Not' is a series of books brought out by Ripley's Publishing, listing virtually every kind of unusual person or event. For instance, Tim Cockerill, known as the Great Inferno, gargles hot molten lava. A 6500 year old baby mummy is depicted in a life-like pose. The artist, Daniel Ortega of San Diego, California, turns ashes of the



Iceberg in Literature

Since most early literate civilisations were located around the warm Mediterranean region, the first mention of an iceberg in world literature did not come until the ninth century AD.

dead into beautiful art pieces. A live picture of lightning was captured by a photographer as the flash hit the Statue of Liberty on 22 September 2010 . Every page is chock full of facts, figures, and full colour photos, highlighting some of the most bizarre things the world has ever seen. Basically, it is a great encyclopaedia of weird phenomena that will catch the attention of old and young alike.

Why is 'Uncle Vanya' appealing to audiences even today?

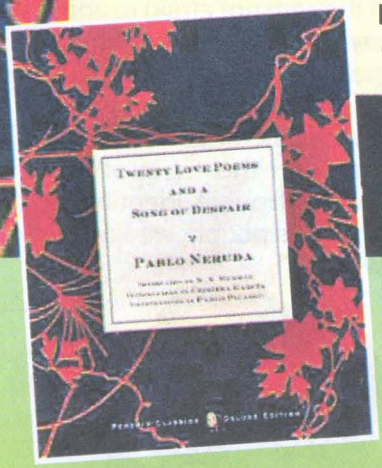
'Uncle Vanya,' is Russian author Anton Chekov's masterpiece of frustrated longing and wasted lives. A tragicomedy, it was first published in 1899, and is a classic about the unlived life, told through the regretful musings of a family. The story revolves around an elderly professor and his glamorous young wife Elena. Two friends, Vanya and Astrov both fall under Elena's spell. Sonya, the professor's daughter is in love with Astrov, but he doesn't return her love. The tale is a sober one, and Chekhov's characters are each unhappy in their own way... and they are not afraid to admit precisely that. What makes Chekhov so appealing to us today is his remarkable ability to richly draw some of the most memorable characters of the modern theatre, all of whom we have no trouble identifying with numerous people we know in our own lives!



Anton Chekhov

Why did 'Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair,' establish the author as a genius?

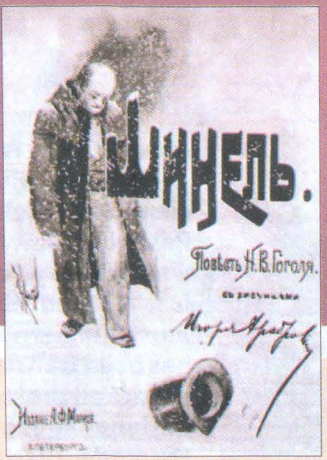
Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair by Pablo Neruda was first published in 1924, when he was only nineteen. This collection of romantic poems is his most popular work. Drawn from the poet's most intimate and personal associations, the poems are a blend of youthful passion and the desolation of grief. In spite of his youth. Neruda was able to convey exquisitely the beauty and nature of love, and the passions, fears, pain, and anguish of human existence. The book established his reputation as a literary genius, and is so popular that it has been translated into many languages.



Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair

Pablo Neruda





The Overcoat



Gogol

Why is 'The Overcoat,' a model for other writers?

'The Overcoat,' a short story by the Russian author Gogol, is a remarkable piece of literary art. It displays Gogol's gift of caricature and imaginative invention. Gogol is a champion of the poor and downtrodden. He gave literary life to the 'little man', usually a minor official crushed by an insensitive administrative system. This is the theme of 'The Overcoat', and Gogol's pathetic little man is Akaky Akakiyevich Akakievich Bashmachkin, an insignificant, copying clerk. There's a lot in 'The Overcoat,' that is as scathingly true in modern life as in 19th-century Russia such as the impersonality and casual cruelty of office life. Gogol knows and writes about poverty - to save a few kopecks, Akaky gives up candles and his evening tea - and the way dreams, even very small ones, can be life-supporting.

With 'The Overcoat', Gogol introduced the short story as a literary form in Russia, providing a new model for other writers of the time.



Chinese Cinderella

The famed story of Cinderella was based on a similiar story first appeared in a Chinese book, in 850 AD.

Why is Goethe's 'Faust,' considered as one of the greatest plays in the German language?

'Faust,' by Goethe is a tragic play in two parts. It is his most famous work, and is considered to be one of the greatest plays in the German language. 'Faust,' is also the play with the largest audience numbers of German language stages.

Faust concerns the fate of a learned gentleman named Dr. Faust, who offers to sell his soul to the Devil in return for the Devil's service for a given period of time.

Faust



'Mother'

Maxim Gorky is the pen name of Russian writer Aleksei Peshkov. Gorky was a literary genius. 'Mother', his most famous novel has been translated into all the leading languages of the world. His other well known literary works are 'Lower Depths,' and 'My Childhood and Reminiscences'. His novels, plays and autobiographies describe the woes of the Russians in the pre-revolutionary days.



Paper Story

Paper was invented in China around 105 AD, by Ts'ai Lun. According to the official history of the

Why is 'Thousand and One Nights' unique?

'The Thousand and One Nights,' is a magnificent collection of tales compiled in Arabic. It is popularly known in English as the Arabian Nights.

King Shahryar got his wife executed, disgusted by her behaviour. Angry with all women he instructed his advisor to bring a new bride to him each night, and killed them all in the morning. The advisor's daughter, Scheherazade, had an ingenious idea. Becoming Queen Scheherazade, she entertained her husband with a story, breaking it at the dawn, at a crucial point. Too eager to hear the rest of the story at night, the king put of her execution. This went on and on. The way Scheherazade weaves the web of her stories is amazing, often telling several stories simultaneously. The collection includes famous stories like Ali Baba and Forty Thieves, Sinbad the Sailor and Aladdin and the Magic Lamp. It was first translated into English in 1835. Later, the translation by Sir Richard Francis Burton (1884) made it more famous all over the world.

Han dynasty (3rd century AD).

Ts'ai Lun was given an aristocratic title after he presented Emperor Ho Ti with samples of paper. In 751 AD, Chinese papermakers were captured by the Arabs at Samarkand, and by 794 AD, several state-owned paper mills operated in Baghdad. The Arabs were manufacturing paper in Spain around 1150.



Ts'ai Lun

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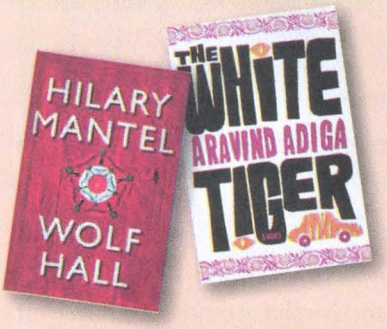
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35. Mrs. Annamma Philip, 4A, Chandika, D.P.Towers, 8, College Lane, Chennai- 600 006

I, V. Sajeev George, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated: 01-02-2012

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Publisher

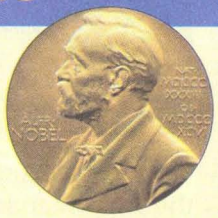
The Man Booker Prize



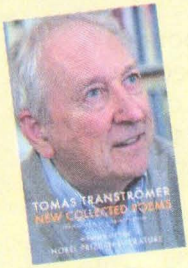
Man Booker Prize is a prestigious British award given annually to a full-length novel. It was established in 1968 by the company Booker McConnell. Entries, must be written by an English-language author from the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth countries, Ireland, or South Africa. The last five Booker Prize novels are given here:

2007: **The Gathering - Anne Enright**
2008: **The White Tiger - Aravind Adiga**
2009: **Wolf Hall - Hilary Mantel**
2010: **The Finkler Question - Howard Jacobson**
2011: **The Sense of an Ending - Julian Barnes**

Nobel Prize in Literature



Since 1901, the Nobel Prize in Literature has been awarded annually to an author from any country. The Swedish Academy decides the prize in any given year. The last ten Nobel Prize winner's list is given below:



- **Tomas Transtromer** (2011)
- **Mario Vargas Llosa** (2010)
- **Herta Muller** (2009)
- **Jean-Marie Gustave**
- **Le Clezio** (2008)
- **Doris Lessing** (2007)
- **Orhan Pamuk** (2006)
- **Harold Pinter** (2005)
- **Elfriede Jelinek** (2004)
- **John M. Coetzee** (2003)
- **Imre Kertesz** (2002)
- **Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul** (2001)



Lost Books

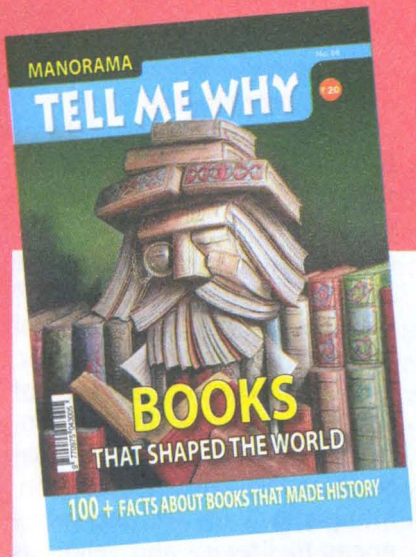
Have you heard of books that made history, because nobody has seen them? Some of them have vanished, or some of them might exist only in imagination. Here is a list of a few some such books:

- Aristophanes' 'Heracles-the Stage Manager,' was one of the playwrights several spoofs that disappeared.
- 'Love's Labour's Won' - this may have been a sequel to Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost. Some also say it might have been an alternative title for the 'Taming of the Shrew.'
- Jane Austen's incomplete novel 'Sanditon,' was about hypochondriacs and cures begun when the author was fatally ill.
- The second half of 'Dead Souls' by Nikolai Gogol. The author burned it after a religious conversion convinced him that literature was paganism.
- Socrates' version of 'Aesop's Fables' was totally destroyed.
- R.L. Stevenson's 'Weir of Hermiston,' was left incomplete by the author's death.



Marco Polo's Writing

Had Marco Polo not been captured by the Genoese and imprisoned for a year, the tales of his historic twenty-two-year adventure in the Far and Middle East (at the end of the thirteenth century) might never have been collected and written down. When he returned to Venice after his odyssey, he became a 'gentleman commander' of a war vessel striving to hold off Genoese traders. In a battle of Curzold Island, his galley was captured, and Marco was hauled off to Genoa and jailed. There he met a writer named Rustichello, who, after hearing Marco's yarns, insisted that they be written down.



Story Behind The Front Cover

The front cover of this issue features an amusing oil painting, **'Le Libraire'** (The Librarian), by the renowned artist Andre Martins de Barros.

The painting shows the figure of an old man formed solely of books, gazing into the world of books through his monocle.

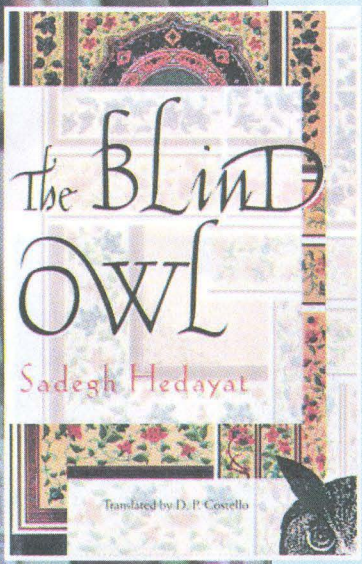
Andre Martins de Barros was born in 1942, in Pau, a French town in the foothills of the Pyrenees near the Spanish border.

Andre's style is characterized by a complex imagination laden with ideas that run deep, and his works take us to a world of fantasy, as is clearly seen in 'Le Libraire'. His painstaking effort, and meticulous attention to detail are also evident in this great work of art.



Andre Martins de Barros

e mail:
amartinsdebarros@gmail.com



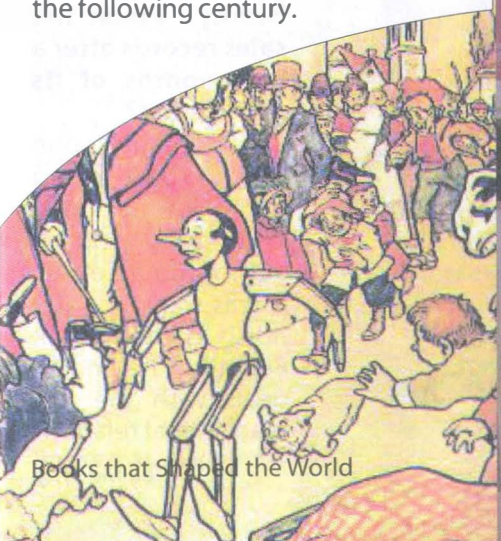
Why is 'The Blind Owl,' considered as a major literary work in Iran?

Sadegh Hedayat, one of the established Iranian writers, is the author of 'The Blind Owl.' Written in Persian, 'The Blind Owl,' is his most enduring work of prose and a major literary work of 20th century Iran. It tells the story of an unnamed pen case painter. The novel contains a maze of symbols, recurring images, social commentary, contemplations of the human condition, interjections on art, and references to literary and religious texts, all of which have, for decades, made it fertile ground for critical interpretation. 'The Blind Owl,' was written during the oppressive latter years of Reza Shah's rule. It was published in 1937 in a limited edition in India, where Hedayat was then living. The novel appeared in Iran's in 1941, and went on to have a tumultuous existence in the hands of Iran's censors, who were present everywhere. 'The Blind Owl,' had found wide acceptance, and was translated into multiple languages.

Why is 'The Adventures of Pinocchio,' very famous?

'The Adventures of Pinocchio,' is one of the most famous novels for children. Written by Italian author Carlo Collodi, it is considered a classic of children's literature. It narrates the story of Pinocchio,' an animated puppet, and his poor father, a woodcarver named Geppetto. The Adventures of Pinocchio is not set in a traditional fairy-tale world. It deals with the hard realities of life.

The first half of the novel was originally a serial, but later, it was completed as a book for children. Children's literature was a new idea in Collodi's time, an innovation in the nineteenth-century. Thus, in content and style it was new and modern, opening the way to many writers of the following century.





STARFACT

Blindness

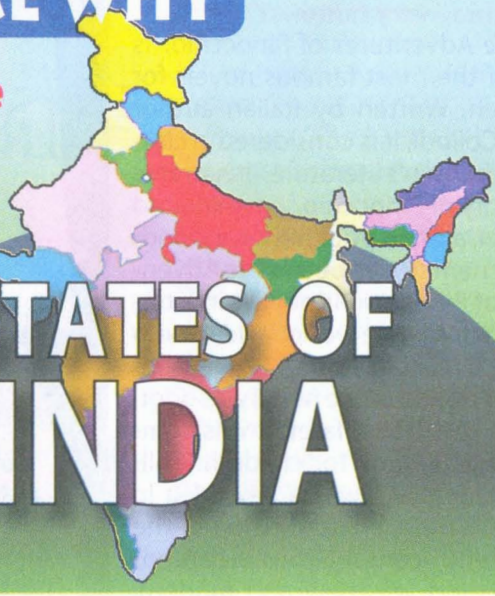
'Blindness,' is a novel by Portuguese author Jose Saramago. It is one of his most famous works. 'Blindness' is set in an unnamed city. It is the story of an unexplained mass epidemic of blindness afflicting nearly everyone in the city. The novel tells about the breakdown of a society, because of the sudden blindness.

● *Ninu Dixit*

MANORAMA

TELL ME WHY

Next issue



STATES OF INDIA



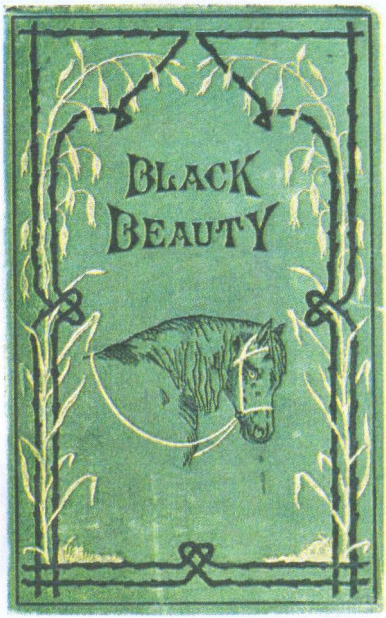
Mayan Story

The sole surviving written record of Mayan history is three codices written in hieroglyphs on bark paper. All three are now held in European cities.

● *Arvind Bhat*

Why did 'Black Beauty,' break the sales records after a few months of its publication?

Black Beauty is one of the best-selling books of all time. Written by English author Anna Sewell, it tells the story of a horse named Black Beauty. The novel deals with the human animal relation-



Black Beauty

ship, and love. It also teaches how to treat people with kindness, sympathy and respect. The birth of this touching story was from the personal experience of Anna Sewell, By telling the story of a horse's life in the form of an autobiography, and describing the world through the eyes of the horse, Anna Sewell broke new literary ground. This best-seller broke all sales records within months.

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

It is our policy to correct errors, and present differing views and clarifications about the contents in previous issues. Please send in your feedback, mentioning the title and page number.

Arvind Goel, from Delhi, has pointed out a mistake in the January issue of Tell Me Why, 'Historic Lasts'. He writes that on Page 48, It is given that Abraham Lincoln was the first president of the United States, which is not correct. George Washington was the first president of the United States and Lincoln was the 16th.

Thank you, Arvind, for your valuable feed back. Actually Abraham Lincoln was the first president of the United States to be assassinated.
We were comparing Lincoln with the last assassinated president, John F Kennedy (35th president of the United States). The words 'to be assassinated' got omitted because of some technical error.

- Editor

I Wonder Why?

The question of the month

Aren't there many little things you have wondered about, but didn't know whom to ask? Send us your questions, and we will give you the fascinating reasons behind the incredible mysteries of life.

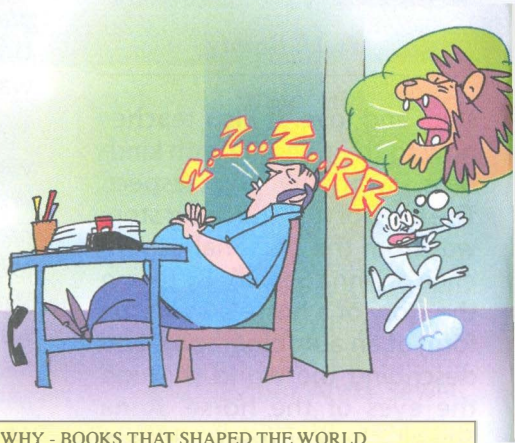


Why do we snore?

Biologically, snoring refers to a vibration in the airway connecting the nose, and the mouth; a vibration that can emerge through the mouth, the nose or through both! The answer to the question 'why do we snore?' is found by looking at the tissues within the airway. This tissue is very soft, and at night, becomes relaxed; it's similar to how some muscles, like biceps, become relaxed at night since the body does not require them. As the throat relaxes during sleep, the wind tunnel becomes narrower, and hence, snoring occurs.

We often snore when we have a cold, because of blocked nasal airways. We would then breathe through our mouth causing negative pressure behind the uvula and soft palate, and this helps to create the sound of snoring. Uvula is the small piece of soft tissue that dangles down from theft palate over the back of the tongue. Snoring can also be caused if the nose has any deformities in the nose.

● *K.P. Sukumar*



MANORAMA TELL ME WHY - BOOKS THAT SHAPED THE WORLD

Editor: Ammu Mathew Editor-in-Charge: N.M. Mohanan*

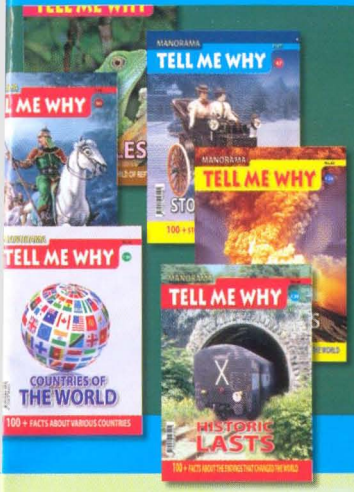
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TELL ME WHY

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FOR KIDS IN ENGLISH



A complete reference resource for children

- More than a hundred questions and their answers.
- Profusely illustrated with photographs and cartoons.
- Helps in school assignments, projects, competitive exams and quizzes.

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13. Indian History
14. Festivals
15. Wonders of the World
16. Great Explorers
17. 100 Great Lives
18. Weather
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20. Deserts
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22. Olympics
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24. Egyptian Civilizations
25. 100 Great Scientists
26. Continents
27. Revolutions
28. 100 Great Medical Discoveries
29. The Moon
30. Great Disasters
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46. Ancient Greece
47. Story of Firsts
48. Natural Wonders
49. Endangered Animals
50. 100 Great Writers
51. Roman Civilization
52. Polar Regions
53. 100 Great Painters
54. World Wars
55. Mammals
56. Parliaments
57. Reptiles
58. Great Women
59. Lost Civilizations
60. Ancient World's Commanders
61. Amphibians
62. Volcanoes
63. Countries of the World
64. Historic Lasts
65. Evolution